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妖しげなペットショップ、
そして謎めいたオーナーのD伯爵……。
偶然見つけた小さなHP（ホームページ）から、
日本中を巻き込む大騒動に発展！
さて、D伯爵のとった行動とは？
ホラー・ミステリーの傑作、第6巻!!

カバーデザイン/上田　敬
カバーイラスト/秋乃茉莉

眠れぬ夜の奇妙な話コミックス

新 Petshop of Horrors 6

新ペットショップ オブ ホラーズ

秋乃茉莉

ソノラマコミックス

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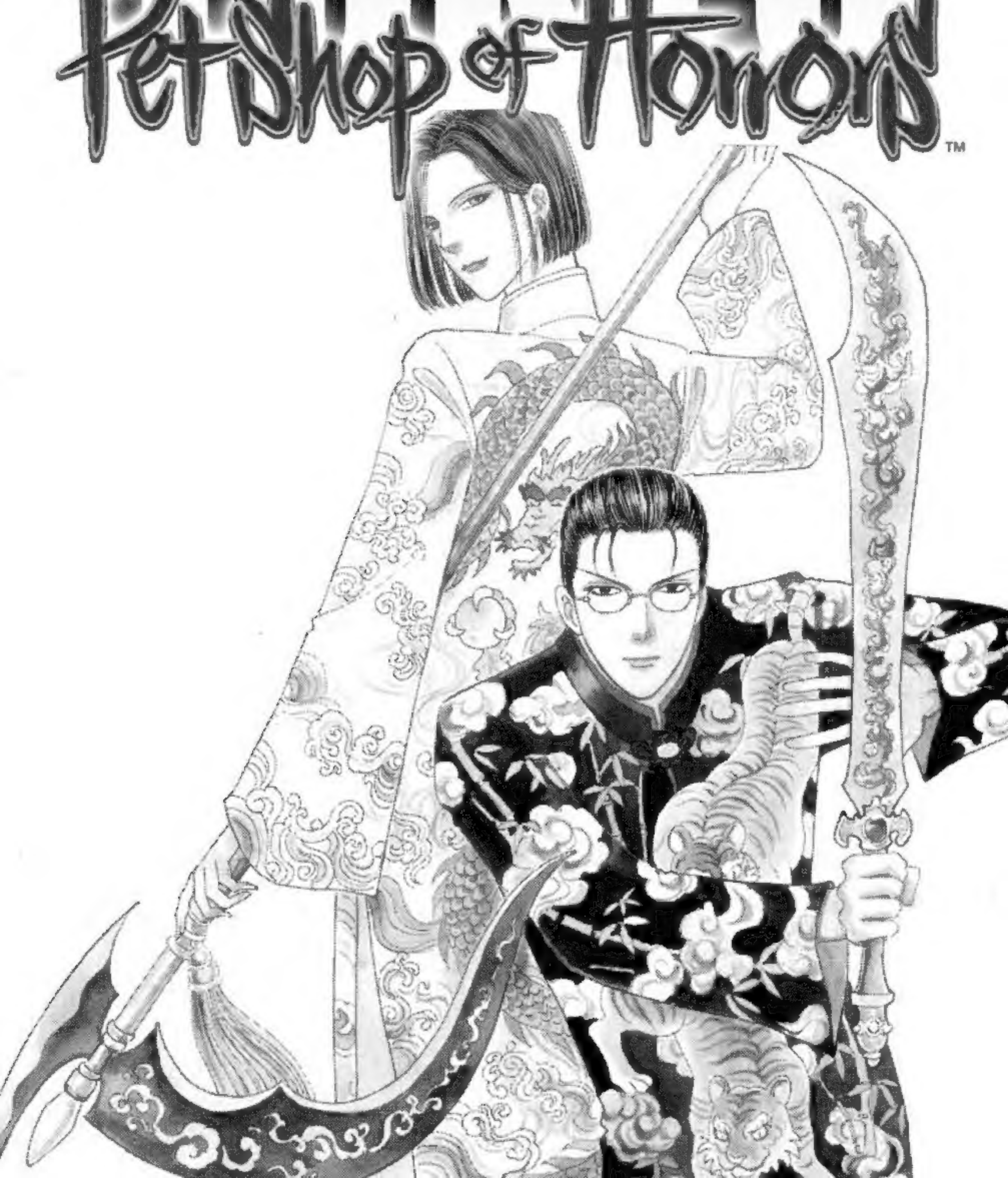
眠れぬ夜の奇妙な話コミックス（B6判）

《秋乃茉莉の既刊》
新Petshop of Horrors①～⑥

TOKYO Pet Shop of Horrors™



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VOLUME 6

BY

MATSURI AKINO

TOKYOPOP®

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Contents

Chapter 19 Download	5
Chapter 20 Dialogue	56
Chapter 21 Dandyism	106
Chapter 22 Detour	157
Afterword	208

第19話／Download

WELL, THEN YOU MUST VISIT MY PET SHOP.

WELCOME, DEAR READER. IS THIS YOUR FIRST VISIT TO THE NEO CHINATOWN BUILDING IN SHINJUKU?

OUR SHOP CARRIES POPULAR PETS LIKE DOGS AND CATS...

...AS WELL AS RARE ANIMALS THAT...

WELL, LET'S JUST SAY THEY REQUIRE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF... SECRECY.

I DON'T WATCH TV, PAPA.

I SAW IT ON MY COMPUTER.

IS THAT LIKE THE ONE YOU SAW ON TELEVISION?

AW, HE'S SO CUTE!! ♡

I'VE DECIDED! I WANT THIS ONE.

KYUU?

IT WAS ON A WEBSITE THAT STREAMS VIDEOS OF ANIMALS.

TH-THAT'S RIGHT.

WHAT ABOUT THIS CAT OVER HERE, SWEETIE?

HE'S ALREADY POTTY-TRAINED.

IF YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING, MISS... SHIBA INU ARE FICKLE WHEN THEY GROW UP AND ALSO NEED A LOT OF EXERCISE.

THEY'RE A LOT OF WORK TO TAKE CARE OF.

NO WAY!!

I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM THE NEXT STAR ON YOUTUBE!

I'M GOING TO SHOOT VIDEOS OF THIS PUPPY AND START UP A BLOG!

YES, OF COURSE.

IT WOULD BE GREAT IF WE COULD GET A CRATE AND COLLAR AS WELL...

LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE TAKING THIS ONE.

YEAH!

OKAY, OKAY!

THE FATHER SEEMS REALLY KIND.

THERE, THERE. IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT.

ヒソヒソ

ヒソヒソ

*アーコココ...

AND TAKE REALLY GOOD CARE OF HIM.

PLEASE BE PATIENT WITH HIM, MISS.

TAIZUU, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?! NEED I REMIND YOU THAT MY SHOP IS *NOT* YOUR OFFICE?!

AND YOUR MAJESTY...

AGREED! TO FORCE AN UNWILLING DOG TO--

TALK ABOUT A SPOILED LITTLE BRAT!

S-SORRY, COUNT...

BUT I'VE BROUGHT SOME PUMPKIN PUDDING FROM THE BAKERY DOWNTOWN.

AND I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO MANAGE MY TENANTS.

I HAVE COME ONLY TO ENJOY SOME TEA.

I am a wanderer, after all.

It's quite popular with youngsters these days.

Taizuu, please.

IT'S AN AMERICAN VIDEO STREAMING SITE, COUNT D.

THE OFFICIAL NAME IS YOUTUBE.

COUNT, I THINK YOU'VE BEEN LIVING IN A CAVE WITH THOSE BATS OF YOURS.

Thank you, Chin-san. Please have a seat.

BY THE WAY, WHAT IS "YOUTUBE"?

MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT IT'S BECOME PRETTY FAMOUS FOR ALL OF THE PET VIDEOS THAT YOU CAN FIND ON IT.

IT'S A WEBSITE WHERE YOU CAN UPLOAD YOUR HOMEMADE VIDEOS AND SHARE THEM WITH THE WORLD.

HE'S RIGHT, COUNT. EVEN TOKIWA...

..TRIED TO DRESS ME UP LIKE A ZOMBIE AND FILM ME DANCING TO "THRILLER" SO HE COULD UPLOAD IT TO THE SITE. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I PUT A STOP TO THAT RIGHT QUICK. I CAN'T STAND THAT SONG...

HERE IN JAPAN, WE HAVE A SIMILAR WEBSITE CALLED NIKONIKO DOUGA.

"THRILLER"?

I'VE DONE JUST FINE WITHOUT A COMPUTER OR CELLULAR PHONE UP UNTIL NOW--I SEE NO REASON WHY I SHOULD CHANGE!

YOU'VE GOTTA BE THE LAST GUY IN JAPAN TO STILL HAVE A ROTARY PHONE.

HAH!

HOW YOU CAN BE SO OLD-FASHIONED AND EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO RUN A BUSINESS IN THIS DAY AND AGE IS BEYOND ME.

You're constantly skipping work and going missing! How's anyone supposed to get a hold of you without a cell phone?!

YOU MAY BE FINE, BUT YOU'RE INCONVENIENCING OTHERS!

.....

TH-THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT... IF I NEED TO CONTACT YOU...

...I HAVE *PROPER METHODS* WITH WHICH TO DO IT.

Like carrier pigeons.

IF YOU GOT A COMPUTER, WE COULD E-MAIL EACH OTHER. IT WOULD BE FUN!

HE HAS A POINT, COUNT.

Ghosts

Even Tokiwa's grandmother has an email address and cell phone.

I LOVE MY 8-TRACK! JUST BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE BUYS INTO NEW TECHNOLOGY DOESN'T MEAN I NEED TO!!

GET WITH THE PROGRAM, COUNT! YOU LIVE IN THE 21ST CENTURY! START ACTING LIKE IT!!! AND FOR GOD'S SAKE, GET RID OF THAT 8-TRACK PLAYER ALREADY!

AH... BUT, COUNT...

...IF YOU HAD A COMPUTER WITH AN INTERNET CONNECTION, WITH JUST A SINGLE MOUSE CLICK...

...YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO OBTAIN ALL THE SWEETS IN THIS COUNTRY.

COUNT, THAT'S NOT ALL IT DOES!

GREAT! NOW LET'S ORDER SOME SWEETS!

ズバヒュン

FOR SOME REASON, I'M NOT SATISFIED.

Ooo

Wow.. Talk about top of the line!

THERE, COUNT. IT SHOULD BE ALL READY TO GO.

NOT ONLY KITTENS, BUT DOGS, BIRDS, HAMSTERS...

THERE ARE VIDEOS OF ALL SORTS OF PETS!

SO NOW WE'RE LOOKING AT PICTURES OF KITTENS...IN A ROOM WHERE WE'RE *SURROUNDED* BY KITTENS.

I SEE, SO THIS IS...

HOW CUTE. ♡

...I SEE.

SEE. I THINK THE YOUNG LADY SAW THIS VIDEO AND WANTED THE SAME DOG.

IT'S THE ERA OF THE INSTANT CELEBRITY. IT'S HARDLY SURPRISING THAT PEOPLE ARE MAKING STARS OUT OF THEIR PETS.

A BLOG WRITTEN BY AN EVERYDAY GUY--A NOBODY--CAN BECOME THE NEXT BESTSELLING BOOK.

Tokiwa was just trying to earn money for my cat food!

15,321

1,217

YOU CAN SEE HOW POPULAR A VIDEO IS BY THE NUMBER OF COMMENTS IT HAS.

IF IT'S POPULAR ENOUGH, YOU CAN SELL PHOTOS AND DVDS OF THE PETS--JUST LIKE A REAL MOVIE!

AND I SUPPOSE THE VIDEOS MAY BE OF SOME SORT OF COMFORT TO PEOPLE WHO CAN'T HAVE PETS FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER. YOU CAN EXPERIENCE THE ENTERTAINMENT THAT COMES WITH OWNING A PET WITHOUT BOTHERING WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY GOOD ARRANGE-MENT TO ME, ACTUALLY.

WELL, LET'S BE REALISTIC. ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE THINK THAT WAY.

MOST OF THE OWNERS POSTING PET VIDEOS ARE JUST TRYING TO SHARE THEM WITH THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY--THE SAME WAY PARENTS ARE ALWAYS SHOWING PHOTOS OF THEIR KIDS TO ANYONE WHO WILL LOOK.

...I SEE.

...NO ONE WILL NEED LIVING PETS ANYMORE, AND YOU'LL HAVE TO CLOSE UP SHOP, D.

Heh heh.

IF THINGS KEEP ON GOING IN THIS DIRECTION ...

OH...

THERE ARE NEW UPDATES!

UGH! WHAT'S WITH THIS BIRD?

IT'S UGLY.

BUT THAT'S ITS CHARM, ISN'T IT?

IT WAS A LEFTOVER IN A PET SHOP.

IT WAS OLD, SO NO ONE WANTED IT.

THE BIRD'S NAME IS MATSUYO?

IT'S A WOMAN?!

WELL, FEMALE BIRDS ARE USUALLY MUCH PLAINER THAN MALES.

IT'S STRANGE THAT THIS UGLINESS MAKES HER LOOK SO CUTE.

AGREED.

COME.

AREN'T YOU ON THE CLOCK NOW?

HUH? ARE YOU SURFING THE INTERNET AGAIN?

PROFES-SOR!

PROFESSOR SMITH, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.

IT'S A JAPANESE WEBSITE, BUT...

LOOK AT THIS.

IT... CAN'T BE!!

THIS BIRD IS...

MATSUYO-SAN...

OF COURSE, MY OLD FRIEND...

YOU WANT TO SOAR AS HIGH AS YOU CAN IN THE SKY INSTEAD OF STAYING HERE IN THIS SMALL CAGE.

KYO!

KYO!

ARE YOU LOOKING AT THE SKY AGAIN?

MATSUYO ISN'T WILD SO SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO HUNT FOR HER OWN FOOD.

MORE THAN LIKELY, SHE'D WIND UP GETTING ATTACKED BY CROWS.

GRAMPS!

YOU CAN'T KEEP THE WINDOW OPEN LIKE THAT!

HER BREED ORIGINATES FROM THE SOUTH ISLANDS.

SHE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SURVIVE THE COLD JAPANESE WINTER.

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT.

SHOU-CHAN, IT'S NOT RIGHT TO...

CHIRP!

YES... THAT'S RIGHT.

HER LAST VIDEO PICKED UP 1,000 MORE VIEWS THAN THE ONE BEFORE. NO SIGN OF THEM SLOWING DOWN, EITHER.

BESIDES, WHAT WOULD HER FANS SAY IF SHE LEFT? IT SEEMS WE CAN'T UPLOAD VIDEOS FAST ENOUGH FOR THEM.

YOUR NURSE IS COMING BY THIS EVENING.

YOUR MEDICINE IS ON THE BOTTOM SHELF IN--

I KNOW, SHOU-CHAN. I KNOW.

THEN I'M HEADING OUT.

I THINK SO. I JUST NEED TO HIT THIS AT THE END, RIGHT?

GRAMPS, YOU REMEMBER HOW TO RESPOND TO E-MAILS NOW, RIGHT?

SHOUICHI, DON'T YOU HAVE A GIRLFRIEND?

YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME OVER EVERY WEEKEND, YOU KNOW.

TAKE LOTS OF PICTURES OF MATSUYO UNTIL THEN.

I'LL BE BACK NEXT WEEKEND.

ALL RIGHT. TELL YOUR MOM AND EVERYONE THAT I SAID HELLO.

IT... IT'S FINE. I SEE MY GIRLFRIEND AT SCHOOL EVERY DAY.

HAVE A GOOD DAY, GRAMPS. CALL ME IF ANYTHING HAPPENS.

KA-CHUNK

OH!

THERE ARE A LOT OF THEM TODAY.

LET'S SEE... E-MAIL...

NOW... THEN...

Hello, Ume-kobucha-san!
I look forward to seeing videos of Matsuyo-san every week.
My friends really enjoy...

IT'S STRANGE...

WHEN MY GRANDSON SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE MATSUYO A HOMEPAGE, I HAD NO IDEA WHAT HE MEANT. BUT IT'S REALLY TAKEN OFF.

TO THINK THAT I CAN TALK TO PEOPLE THROUGHOUT JAPAN, WHOSE FACES AND NAMES I DON'T EVEN KNOW...

IT MEANS I DON'T HAVE TIME TO BE ABSENT-MINDED.

HEH HEH...

THIS IS ALL THANKS TO YOU, MATSUYO-SAN.

QUAWK!!

OH, MY.
OH, MY.

Hello,
My name is Mr. Smith.
I live in Hawaii.
I saw the picture of Matsuyo.
Would you be so kind
as to speak with me?

HUH?

HA
HA
HA!

IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE BECOMING KNOWN WORLDWIDE, MATSUYO!

KYO!

CLK

I'LL HAVE SHOUICHI READ IT WHEN HE COMES NEXT WEEKEND.

WELL, I GUESS IT'S ALL RIGHT.

THIS IS A PROBLEM. I DON'T UNDER-STAND THIS MESSAGE AT ALL.

店物寶

HELLO!

ARE YOU ALONE TODAY?

HOW IS THE SHIBA INU DOING?

OH... NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

...I'M HERE TO BUY A CAT.

HE'S FINE, I GUESS.

BUT, TODAY...

OH?

HE DOESN'T LISTEN TO ME AT ALL.

HE'S JUST NO FUN, COUNT. WHEN I TURN ON THE CAMERA, HE STOPS MOVING AROUND.

LUCKILY, MY DAD'S BEEN DOING IT FOR ME!

YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT THE DOG. IT *IS* A REAL PAIN TO WALK HIM EVERY MORNING.

.....

DO YOU HAVE THAT BREED?!

RIGHT NOW, THE MOST POPULAR CATS ON THE SITE ARE AMERICAN SHORTHAIRS.

OF COURSE WE DO.

SO? HOW MUCH IS IT?

OH MY GOODNESS! HE... HE...

HE'S SOOOO CUTE!!!

THIS CHILD CARRIES THE BLOOD OF A CAT THAT WAS ONCE OWNED BY THE ROYAL HOUSE OF ITS COUNTRY.

IT IS A VERY RARE AND IMPORTANT PUREBRED.

WH-WHY IS IT SO EXPEN-SIVE?

HUH?

1,000,000 YEN.

NOTE. 1,000,000 yen = about $10,000

I GET WHAT'S GOING ON HERE! YOU DON'T WANT TO SELL A CAT TO ME!

THAT IS ABSOLUTELY NOT TRUE. I WOULD LOVE TO SELL YOU A CAT, PROVIDED YOU PREPARE THE PROPER AMOUNT OF MONEY.

TH-THEN WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?

IT IS WORTH 2,000,000 YEN.

KOKKAKKA!

C-COUNT?!

GO RIGHT AHEAD.

THESE CATS ARE TOO EXPEN-SIVE!

MY PAPA IS A LAWYER! I'LL HAVE HIM SUE YOU!

WHAT?

Mew.

Mew.

THAT IS--

BUT...

?

?

I SEE...

Mrrow!

THIS YOUNG MASTER SAYS HE WOULDN'T MIND BEING CARED FOR BY YOU.

HUH...?!

THIS KITTEN...

...PICKED... ME?

Sigh.

THAT ONE...

HE IS OF NORMAL PRICE.

H-HOW MUCH IS THIS CAT?

THAT LITTLE BRAT'S ONLY GOING TO MAKE THE SAME MISTAKES AGAIN.

YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, COUNT?

SEE YA!

AND TAKE A LOOK AT MY BLOG WHEN I GET IT UP! ♡

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THE TWO OF THEM ARE A MATCH.

HE CHOSE HER, AND HE WAS QUITE FIRM ABOUT IT.

IT CANNOT BE HELPED.

THAT GIRL, TOO...

WHAT?

THERE'S NO NEW MATSUYO UPDATE FOR TODAY.

THE UPDATES USUALLY HAPPEN EVERY SUNDAY NIGHT.

I WONDER IF "UME-KOBUCHA-SAN" IS A SALARYMAN.

MAYBE HE HAS A BUSINESS TRIP THIS WEEK?

MATSUYOMAN-SAN MUST BE REALLY BUSY.

AND HE'S NOT REPLYING TO HIS E-MAIL.

HUH? NO UPDATE THIS WEEK EITHER?!

I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO MATSUYO! I HOPE SHE'S ALL RIGHT!

SHE'S SO UGLY THAT SHE'S CUTE. YOU CAN'T HELP BUT FALL FOR HER WHEN YOU WATCH HER VIDEOS.

I ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO HER UPDATES. THEY'RE THE PERFECT WAY TO START THE WEEK.

MAYBE THE WEB-MASTER IS SICK?

AW, I MISS MATSUYO!

WHERE ARE YOU, UME-KOBUCHA-SAN?!

SOMEONE COULD'VE KIDNAPPED HER.

YOU DON'T SUPPOSE MATSUYO COULD'VE DIED, DO YOU?

A BIRD THAT FAMOUS WOULD BE WORTH A LOT OF MONEY.

WELL, SHE ***WAS*** AWFULLY OLD.

HEY, HEY! DON'T JOKE AROUND.

STOP IT!! THAT'S A HORRIBLE THING TO SAY!

Hello Ume-kobucha,
A few days ago, I wrote you an important e-mail concerning Matsuyo. Did you receive it? I'm still waiting for your response...

HUH? IT'S IN ENGLISH.

MATSUYO HAS AN INTERNATIONAL FANBASE?

SOMEONE TRANSLATE IT.

I AM PROFESSOR SMITH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII. I SPECIALIZE IN BIRDS AND BIRD STUDIES.

I WOULD LIKE TO CONTACT MATSUYO'S OWNER. DOES ANYONE KNOW OF A WAY?

A PROFESSOR AT A UNIVERSITY?!

THAT'S KIND OF RUDE, ISN'T IT? LOOKING UP THE GUY'S PERSONAL INFORMATION.

IF I KNEW, I WOULD HAVE VISITED A LONG TIME AGO.

SERIOUSLY?!

WELL, WE CAN'T FIND IT ANYHOW, SO IT DOESN'T MATTER.

DOES ANYONE KNOW WHERE UME-KOBUCHA-SAN'S HOUSE IS?

I'M NOT SURE.

THE SITE SAYS THAT SHE'S FROM A NEARBY PET SHOP...

WELL, DOES ANYONE KNOW THE PET SHOP WHERE MATSUYO WAS OBTAINED?

IN A FEW OF THE PHOTOS YOU CAN SEE SOME TALL BUILDINGS. I'M PRETTY SURE THEY'RE FROM SHINJUKU.

THAT MUST BE WHERE UME-KOBUCHA-SAN LIVES.

YOU'RE RIGHT. FROM THIS ANGLE IT LOOKS LIKE EAST SHINJUKU.

THANK YOU. NEXT WEEK, I WILL BE GOING TO JAPAN TO CHECK ALL THE PET STORES THERE.

ALL THE WAY FROM HAWAII?!

WAIT A SECOND! DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY PET SHOPS THERE ARE IN SHINJUKU?!

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

THANKS FOR THE WARNING, BUT EVEN IF IT'S A LONG SHOT, I STILL NEED TO TRY. MATSUYO IS QUITE A BIRD, AND I WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR A GLIMPSE OF HER.

……

ACTUALLY, THIS IS JUST SPECULATION, BUT...

WHY GO THAT FAR?

DO YOU LIKE HER THAT MUCH? SHE'S JUST AN UGLY BIRD.

OBSESS MUCH?

...MATSUYO MAY BE A SMALL WHITE HONEYEATER, *MOHO BRACCATUS*, A SPECIES WHICH WAS THOUGHT TO HAVE GONE EXTINCT TEN YEARS AGO.

SMALL WHITE HONEYEATER?!

EXTINCT?!

I'M SEARCHING ON WIKIPEDIA RIGHT NOW.

Small White Honeyeater (Kaua'i 'O'o)
An avian species that lived in the Hawaiian Islands.
There are five confirmed relatives of the honeyeater.
The Bishop 'O'o, was declared extinct in 1900.
The largest species of this genus, the Hawai'i 'O'o, went extinct in 1935.
The last 'O'o species, the Kaua'i 'O'o, was declared extinct in 1990.
Their extinction was brought on by the destruction of their habitat as well as by hunters, who sought the birds as prey because of their beautiful feathers.

I'M NOT CERTAIN, BUT I BELIEVE SO. MALES HAVE DISTINCT FEATHER PATTERNS, SO I CAN EASILY IDENTIFY THEM, BUT...

...THE FEMALES LOOK SIMILAR TO ANOTHER SPECIES. ONE FAR MORE COMMON.

THAT'S WHY I REALLY WANT TO EXAMINE HER DIRECTLY.

ARE YOU SAYING THAT MATSUYO IS THE LAST SURVIVOR OF AN EXTINCT SPECIES?!

SERIOUSLY?!

SURELY THAT VIOLATES ALL KINDS OF LAWS.

AN EXTINCT SPECIES? SO WHAT IS SHE DOING AS SOME GUY'S PET?

UME-KOBUCHA AND THE PET SHOP MAY HAVE PURCHASED HER WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT SHE WAS.

I JUST WANT TO SEE MATSUYO WITH MY OWN EYES.

THAT DOESN'T MATTER. IF MATSUYO IS A HONEYEATER, SHE'S A PRICELESS TREASURE!

.....

.....

.....

...YOU'RE RIGHT.

SMITH-SAN WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEARCH ALL THE PET STORES IN SHINJUKU ON HIS OWN...BUT IF EVERYONE HELPS, IT SHOULD GO A LOT FASTER, RIGHT?

ALL RIGHT, LET'S DO IT!

EVERYONE...?!

IF WE CAN FIND THE PET SHOP THAT SOLD MATSUYO...

...WE MAY BE ABLE TO FIND OUT WHERE SHE CAME FROM AND WHERE SHE'S LIVING NOW.

KNOCK KNOCK

YES, YES! I'M COMING!

ARE YOU COUNT D?

AH... THE CONVENIENCES OF MODERN CIVILIZATION ARE AMA-ZING. ♡

WITH THIS, I WON'T HAVE TO SPECIAL ORDER IMPORTED DESSERTS AT THE DEPARTMENT STORES ANYMORE. THAT GETS SO EXPENSIVE...

OH! I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS! ♡

I HAVE A DELIVERY FOR YOU!

2-IL

天地無用

HEY, THIS BETTER NOT BE YOUR DOING!

YOU COUNT!!

MY GOODNESS. WHAT IS IT?

IF YOU WANT TEA, IT'S NOT READY YET.

Legendary Extinct Bird (?!)
Honeyeater Matsuyo's
Search Thread

YOU GET BACK HERE, COUNT!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT. SAY, LOOK AT THE TIME...

I KNEW IT!! IT *WAS* YOU, WASN'T IT?!

COUGH!

HACK!

KAFF!

YOU OKAY, COUNT?

UNREACH-ABLE?!

THE SITE'S FANS HAVE BEGUN A SEARCH FOR MATSUYO AND HER OWNER, UME-KOBUCHA-SAN. THEY'RE SEARCHING ALL OF SHINJUKU.

WORD GOT OUT ABOUT THE WHOLE THING, AND NOW IT'S THE TALK OF THE WEB. THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LOOKING FOR THE BIRD.

...BECAUSE THE SITE'S WEBMASTER HAS BEEN UNREACHABLE FOR OVER A MONTH.

IT LOOKS LIKE ALL OF THIS CAME ABOUT...

I SUPPOSE IT'S BEEN...

...MORE THAN A YEAR.

WELCOME.

WOW.

IT LOOKS LIKE A SET FROM AN OLD CHINESE MOVIE.

OOH, TO THINK THAT A BUILDING LIKE THIS WOULD INCLUDE A PET SHOP OF ALL THINGS.

THAT PARAKEET IS PRETTY.

A BIRD, HUH?

...SMALL BIRD OR A HAMSTER WOULD BEST SUIT YOUR NEEDS.

I THINK PERHAPS A CAT...

I ALSO LIVE ALONE, SO WHILE A PET WOULD BE NICE, IT WOULD NEED TO BE ONE THAT DOESN'T REQUIRE TOO MUCH CARE.

AS YOU CAN SEE, MY LEGS AND BACK ARE PRETTY WEAK.

HA HA HA. YOU MAY BE RIGHT.

...A PARAKEET MAY BE A GOOD CONVERSATION PARTNER FOR YOU, GRAMPS.

I'VE HEARD THEY CAN MEMORIZE WORDS SO...

SHRIP!

WELL, WELL...

MADAM...

.....

WHOA! WHAT AN UGLY BIRD...

CHEEP! CHEEP! CHEEP!

I KNOW THE FEELING. IT'S BEEN ABOUT TEN YEARS SINCE MY WIFE LEFT ME BEHIND, AS WELL.

SHE HAS BEEN LIVING HERE FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, FEELING PRETTY ALONE.

I WAS UNABLE TO OBTAIN A MALE OF HER SPECIES.

Y-YES.

IS THAT BIRD FOR SALE AS WELL?

I'D IMAGINE A PAIR OF SENIORS LIKE US WOULD GET ALONG PRETTY WELL.

FORGET ABOUT THAT!!

IS THIS BIRD REALLY AN EXTINCT WHATEVER-YOU-CALL-IT?!

IT WAS TRULY LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

I BELIEVE THAT IT WAS THE MOST PERFECT MATCH IN ALL--

LOOK AT THE HITS THIS SITE HAS BEEN GETTING!

HELLO, EVERYBODY!

I AM PROFESSOR SMITH!

THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME IN JAPAN!

ざわ ざわ

YEAH...

AMAZING... I NEVER THOUGHT WE'D DRAW SO MANY PEOPLE.

THEY'RE SEARCHING FOR SOMEONE. MAYBE A CHILD'S GONE MISSING.

IS THAT SOME SORT OF RALLY?

A MEETING?

IF MATSUYO IS REALLY A SMALL WHITE HONEY-EATER, THEN THIS WILL TRULY BE A HISTORIC DAY.

I WOULD BE HONORED IF I COULD JUST SEE A LIVING SPECIMEN WITH MY OWN EYES.

GUYS, MY ONLINE NAME IS PINE MOTH...

...AND I'LL BE THE ONE COORDINAT-ING THIS SEARCH.

IF WE ALL WORK TOGETHER, I'M CONFIDENT WE CAN FIND OUT WHERE SHE IS!

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Matsuyo Search

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THE REST OF YOU WILL USE THE PICTURES OF MATSUYO TO DETERMINE THE ANGLE AT WHICH THEY WERE TAKEN. USE THE BUILDINGS IN THE BACKGROUND AS A REFERENCE.

ONCE YOU HAVE AN IDEA, START ASKING THE RESIDENTS OF THE AREA...

...IF THEY HAVE ANY IDEA WHO UME-KOBUCHA-SAN MAY BE AND WHERE HE MAY LIVE.

WE'RE ON IT!

WE'VE COMPILED A LIST OF ALL THE PET SHOPS IN SHINJUKU. AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE ARE QUITE A LOT OF THEM.

THOSE OF YOU WITH HANDLES THAT START WITH THE LETTERS A THROUGH R WILL BE SPLITTING UP AND VISITING THE PET SHOPS.

GOT IT!

ROGER.

...CALL ME RIGHT AWAY AND I'LL GET THE INFORMATION TO SMITH.

WELL, THEN...

IF YOU FIND ANY CLUES...

...LET'S GET STARTED!

CRIES

WELL, HALF OF THEM PROBABLY JOINED BECAUSE OF ALL THE BUZZ THE EVENT'S BEEN GETTING, BUT YEAH, IT'S ALL FOR A BIRD.

AND IT'S NOT JUST THEM.

...TO FIND A SINGLE BIRD?

THIS MANY PEOPLE HAVE GATHERED...

GOOD LUCK, EVERYONE!

...AND WATCHING MATSUYO'S VIDEOS...

...JUST SO THEY CAN HELP TRACK DOWN HER OWNER.

I SURE HOPE THEY FIND HER!

I LIVE IN OKAYAMA AND WON'T BE ABLE TO JOIN YOU, BUT I WISH YOU ALL THE BEST OF LUCK!

KEEP LOOKING!

AS WE SPEAK, THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WATCHING ON THE INTERNET ...

I'LL SAY A PRAYER AT OUR NEIGHBORHOOD'S SHINTO SHRINE FOR YOU.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?! IF THEY FIND OUT YOU SOLD AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?! YOU'LL HAVE TO CLOSE UP SHOP!

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMEONE SHOWS UP HERE.

UH, ACCORDING TO THE SITE'S MESSAGE BOARD...

...IT'S BEEN ABOUT A MONTH.

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE THE UPDATES STOPPED?!

IT'S WORSE THAN THAT!

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF THE SHOP WHILE I'M AWAY.

WHAT?

HEY, COUNT!

IT MAY BE TOO LATE.

HUH?!

ONE MONTH...

TAIZUH?!

HEY! WAIT!

SHH!

DAMMIT, COUNT!

YOU *DO* KNOW WHERE THE OWNER IS!

IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE GONE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M SNEAKING AROUND LIKE A CRIMINAL WITH YOU.

IS THAT IT?

LET'S SEE, IT SHOULD BE A LITTLE FARTHER AHEAD.

...

MMPH!

DING DONG

DING DONG

MY NAME IS COUNT D. I OWN THE PET SHOP IN THE NEO CHINATOWN BUILDING.

I RE-MEMBER YOU.

CHK

WHO IS IT?

YOU LOOK QUITE WELL.

YOU...

I AM, BUT...

IT HAS BEEN A WHILE.

YES... YOU HAVE GOOD TIMING.

SHE'S RIGHT OVER THERE.

THEN, AS I THOUGHT.

COUNT...?

YES.

TO BE ABLE TO SEE YOU AT THE END...

AH... THANK GOOD-NESS.

MADAM...

PLEASE, TELL HIM...

...THAT I WAS VERY HAPPY...

I HAVE MEDICINE, AND YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN STRONG.

IT MAY NOT BE THE END YET.

...PLEASE FIND A REPLACEMENT FOR ME. ONE WHO IS MUCH YOUNGER...AND CUTER...

SO, COUNT D...

I...I CAN'T STAND THE THOUGHT OF HIM BEING LONELY.

...IS WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO HIM WHEN I AM GONE.

MY ONLY WORRY...

Y-YOU CAN H-HEAR...?

I DON'T NEED A REPLACEMENT FOR YOU.

KYU...

I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

I'VE MADE A LOT OF FRIENDS ON THE INTERNET.

HEH HEH...

YOU'RE SO SILLY.

MAD-AM...?

MATSUYO?!

OH, MATSUYO...

SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE, COUNT.

ACTU-ALLY...

...MY GRANDSON DID EVERY-THING ON THE COMPUTER FOR ME, BUT...

YOU KNEW EVERYONE WAS WORRIED, DID YOU NOT?

WHY HAVE YOU NOT UPDATED HER BLOG?

...NEITHER OF THEM KNEW HOW TO UPDATE THE SITE.

MY DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND MY NURSE HAVE BEEN TAKING CARE OF ME, BUT...

...RECENTLY, HE GOT INTO A BIKE ACCIDENT AND WAS HOSPI-TALIZED.

WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW I COULD POSSIBLY TELL EVERYONE ON THE SITE.

AND...

...NOW WITH MATSUYO-SAN'S PASSING...

HUH...?

B-BUT...

I BELIEVE THAT YOU SHOULD TELL THEM EVERYTHING.

HUH?!

THIS IS--

THERE'S BEEN AN UPDATE ON MATSUYO'S BLOG!!

Matsuyo-san's Little Room

XXXX XX XX

XX XX XX

Matsuyo Search

...AND MOST PEOPLE WOULD PREFER NOT TO FACE IT.

HOW-EVER...

THE DEATH OF A PET IS NEVER AN EASY THING...

...A PET'S LIFE WILL END BEFORE ITS OWNER'S.

AND IN MOST CASES...

I APOLOGIZE FOR CAUSING EVERYONE SO MUCH WORRY.

OWNING A PET IS NOT ALWAYS PLEASANT.

...MOST PEOPLE WOULD PREFER NOT TO WASH THEIR ANIMAL, OR WALK IT EVERYDAY OR CLEAN UP AFTER IT.

...REALLY MEANS.

I'M AFRAID I HAVE A SAD ANNOUNCEMENT FOR EVERYONE.

ALL OF THIS IS PART OF WHAT OWNING A PET ...

RESPON-SIBILITY?

Why me...?

TRK

TRK

TRK

EVERYONE HAS A RESPON-SIBILITY OF SEEING HER TO THE VERY END.

SHE LOST THE REST OF HER SPECIES DUE TO THE SELFISHNESS OF MANKIND.

IT'S EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY BECAUSE SHE IS THE LAST OF HER KIND.

OH MY GOD!

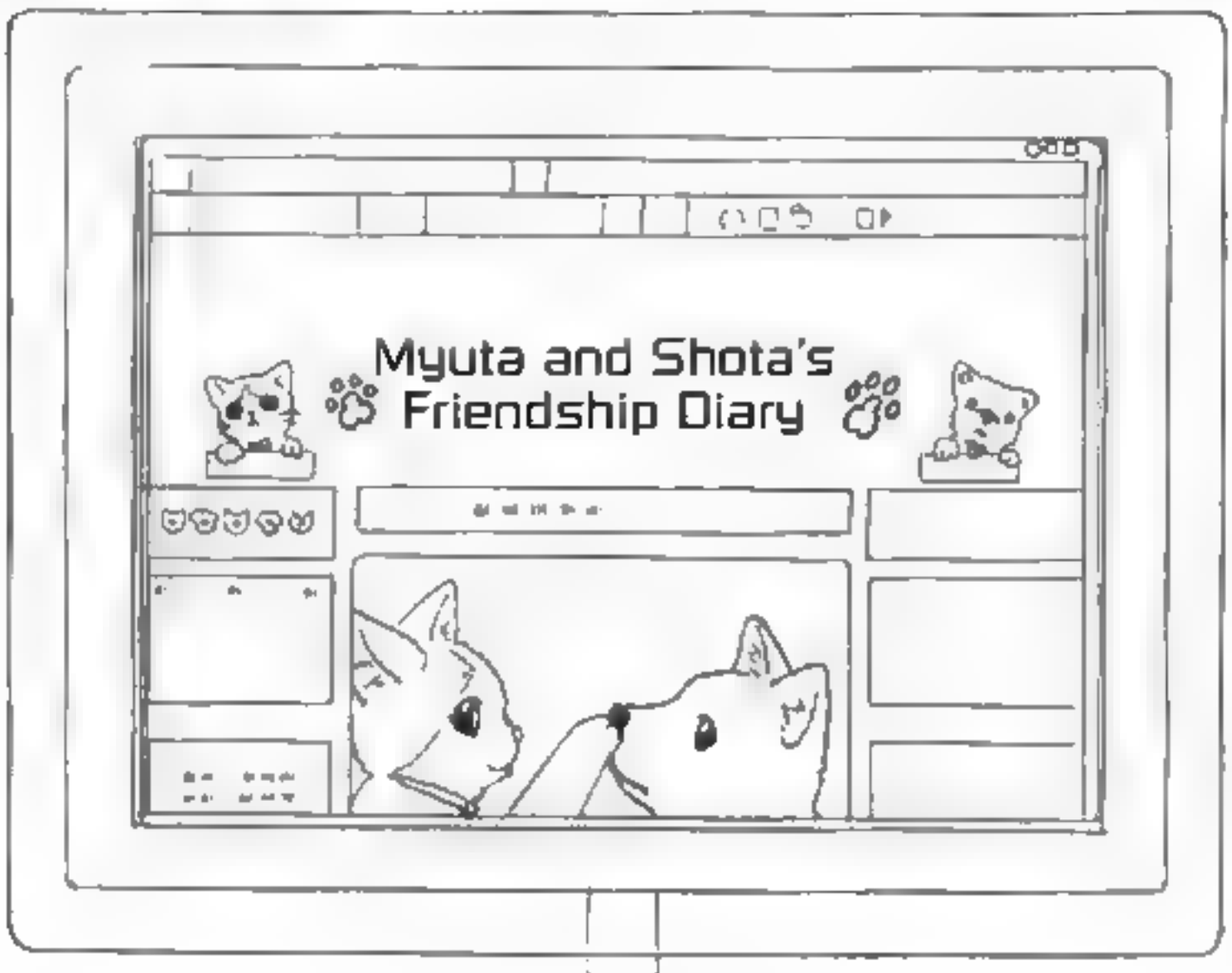
PROFES-SOR?

NO WAY!

MATSUYO!!

I WONDER IF THAT PAIN SHOULD BE PLACED ON MANKIND'S SHOULDERS AS WELL.

...HAS ALREADY BEGUN.



IT LOOKS LIKE A NEW CONNECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PETS...

STORY 19 END

第20話／Dialogue

OF COURSE. BUT SHOULDN'T YOU DISCUSS IT WITH YOUR HUSBAND?

YES, I SUPPOSE IT IS. THEN IF YOU MUST GO, COUNT, WOULD YOU TAKE SOME OF MY CHILDREN WITH YOU?

I'M AFRAID I MUST LEAVE SOON.

THEN I ACCEPT YOUR OFFER.

PLEASE, COUNT, WITH ALL OF THESE MOUTHS TO FEED, HE'S NOT GOING TO MISS FOUR OR FIVE OF THEM.

OH MY, IS IT THAT LATE ALREADY?

HMM...

YAY!

IT WILL PROBABLY BE... A WONDERFUL THING.

OR RATHER, YOU WILL UNTIL YOU MEET YOUR NEW MASTER. WHEN YOU DO, HE OR SHE WILL TAKE YOU HOME TO CARE FOR YOU.

YOU'RE GOING TO LIVE AT MY SHOP FOR A WHILE.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

WHY, HELLO, COUNT! HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

NICE TO SEE EVERYONE DOING SO WELL.

LONG TIME NO SEE, D!

HUH?

OOH! WHO'S THAT LADY?!

YES.

WOW! LOOK AT ALL THE PEOPLE!

COME ON, LET'S GO.

HMM...

COUNT?

WELCOME BACK!

HEY, COUNT!

I HEARD FROM THE OWNER OF THE ALLIGATOR SNAPPING TURTLE THAT I SOLD LAST YEAR. IT SEEMS THE TURTLE'S HEALTH IS DECLINING. I'LL HAVE TO PAY HIM A VISIT.

YOU GOT IT!

WE HAVE SOME NEW GUESTS. I'LL NEED AN AQUARIUM PREPARED, IF YOU DON'T MIND. WE'LL NEED A HOME FOR OUR NEW BABY DRAGONFISH.

REALLY. IS IT A NEW SPECIES OF SEA HARE?

NO, NOT A SEA HARE.

I PASSED AN EXTREMELY RARE WOMAN TODAY DURING MY TRAVEL.

AND THE STRANG-EST THING HAPPENED ...

IT COULD SWIM, BUT IT LOOKED OUT OF PLACE IN THE OCEAN.

IN FACT, I DON'T BELIEVE IT WAS AN AQUATIC CREATURE AT ALL.

すすめ

COFFEE

Kabuki-cho – First Street

YES, WELL, IF YOU'RE REALLY THAT HARD UP FOR SOMETHING TO DO, YOU'RE WELCOME TO GO BACK AND WATCH MY STORE.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY YOU POST HOURS ON YOUR SHOP, COUNT. YOU NEVER STICK TO THEM.

KEEP THE CHANGE.

THAT WAS...

I WAS JUST THINKING THAT SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL...

NO... SHE'S...

HUH?

IS SHE SOMEONE YOU KNOW?

CAUGHT YOUR EYE, D?

SERIOUSLY, THAT GAL IS PAST HER PRIME. MAYBE EIGHT YEARS AGO SHE WOULD'VE BEEN SOMETHING, BUT NOT NOW.

TAIZUU!

I GUESS IF YOU LIKE 'EM OLD.

NO.

OF COURSE, WITH AGE COMES... EXPERIENCE.

SHE COULD BE A BAR-TENDER AT A CLUB, TAIZUU.

SHE HAS A MORE DANGEROUS SMELL.

WELCOME BACK.

ANE-SAN!!

NOTE: "Ane san" literally means "older sister," but here it indicates the woman is a yakuza boss.

WE DISCUSSED THIS. IF YOU MUST GO OUT, TAKE SOMEONE WITH YOU! IT'S NOT SAFE OTHER--

SHUT THE HELL UP.

ANE-SAN! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? YOU KNOW YOU SHOULDN'T GO OUT ALONE.

B-BUT, ANE-SAN...

WITH GOONS LIKE YOU TAILING ME AROUND, I STAND OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB AND CAN'T GET ANY SHOPPING DONE!

CHINEL

...IF SOMETHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU, AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BOSS...

IF YOU IDIOTS ARE SO CONCERNED FOR MY SAFETY, MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET OUT THERE AND GUT THE BASTARDS WHO KILLED KATAKURA!

I KNOW DAMN WELL WHAT WOULD HAPPEN!

YES, ANE-SAN!

Y...

YOU'RE FROM...

...THE KIRYUU GROUP...

SPOKEN LIKE A TRUE BOSS.

YOU HAVE A LOT OF GUTS, JUST LIKE YOUR PRE-DECESSORS.

HA HA HA!

店物寵

KATAKURA YAKUZA?

WAS?!

WELL, TAIZUU, IT APPEARS YOU WERE RIGHT.

THAT WOMAN WAS THE WIFE OF THE KATAKURA YAKUZA BOSS.

YES.

PHERO-MONES?

I SEE... SO THOSE WERE PHEROMONES SHE RELEASED DUE TO THE LOSS OF HER OTHER HALF.

YES. THE BOSS, YOSHIHITO KATAKURA, WAS FATALLY SHOT ABOUT A MONTH AGO.

HIS WIFE--WIDOW NOW, I SUPPOSE-- WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THE PREVIOUS BOSS.

ACTUALLY, KATAKURA-SAN MARRIED INTO HIS POSITION AS BOSS.

MUST BE RETRIBU-TION FOR SOMETHING OR OTHER.

SO TO PRESERVE THE STRENGTH OF THE GROUP, IT WAS DECIDED THAT TATSUKO-SAN, THE ONLY CHILD OF THE PREVIOUS BOSS, SHOULD LEAD IT.

She was young, but tough. People joked about her hiding a machine gun under her school uniform

WHEN HER FATHER PASSED AWAY, CONFLICT WITHIN THE GROUP OVER WHO WOULD BE THE NEXT BOSS GOT OUT OF HAND.

HER NAME IS TATSUKO, AND HER MOTHER WAS A MISTRESS OF THE BOSS WITH NO CONNECTIONS WHATSOEVER TO THE YAKUZA.

IT WAS SUCCESSFUL IN ESTABLISHING PEACE WITHIN THE GANG. ESPECIALLY SINCE THEY KNEW HER HUSBAND WOULD HOLD THE REAL POWER.

SO THEY WENT WITH BLOODLINE OVER POWER...

IT'S NOT MUCH DIFFERENT THAN A POLITICAL MARRIAGE ARRANGED TO PREVENT A WAR.

EITHER WAY, YOU GOTTA FIGURE THE CIVIL UNREST HAS STARTED AGAIN.

WELL, I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS.

THEN DOES THIS MEAN TATSUKO-SAN'S NEXT HUSBAND WILL BE THE NEXT BOSS?

IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, ANE-SAN, JUST ASK AND I'LL COME RUNNING.

I KNOW YOU DIDN'T ASK, BUT I WOULD LOVE TO BE YOUR PILLAR OF STRENGTH.

I'M SURE THAT YOU FEEL PRETTY LONELY RIGHT NOW...

...THANK YOU.

WHILE YOU WERE GONE, I BURNED SOME INCENSE FOR THE BOSS.

.....

PLEASE SHOW KIRYUU-SAN OUT.

YES, ANE-SAN!

I'M A LITTLE TIRED, SO I THINK I'LL BE RETIRING EARLY.

SIGH...

MY DEAR...

I WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO AVENGE YOUR TERRIBLE DEATH...

...NO ONE WILL FORGIVE ME UNLESS I AT LEAST **SEEM** TO TAKE THE PROPER MEASURES.

YET, IN OUR WORLD OF DUTY, RESPECT AND OBLIGATION...

...BUT IT'S NOT LIKE THAT WILL BRING YOU BACK TO ME.

I'LL JUST BE CONTINUING A CYCLE OF VIOLENCE.

YURI...

I DON'T 'WANT TO DRAG YOU INTO MY WORLD.

I WANT TO SEE YOU...

..I WANT TO SEE YOU SO BADLY.

THAT'S WHY I'VE SENT YOU OVERSEAS FOR SCHOOL, SO THAT YOU CAN DEVELOP WITHOUT THIS SORT OF PRESSURE. WITHOUT RUNNING THE RISK OF BECOMING...JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER.

AND HE TREATED ME WITH KINDNESS AND RESPECT. NOT BECAUSE I WAS THE BOSS' DAUGHTER...

...BUT BECAUSE HE LOVED ME...IN HIS OWN CLUMSY WAY.

HE COULD BE FIRM, EVEN CRUEL WHEN DEALING WITH HIS ENEMIES...

...BUT WHEN HE WAS WITH HIS DAUGHTER, HE WAS A HAPPY, DOTING FATHER.

TO TELL THE TRUTH...

...I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE GROUP AT ALL.

I'D GIVE IT ALL UP...

...JUST TO BE WITH YOU AGAIN.

THE MAN IS NO LONGER HERE ...

SO WHY ARE YOU STILL ALIVE?

JOIN ME.

I'LL TAKE YOU TO SEE HIM...

WOOF!
WOOF!
WOOF!
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
WOOF!
WOOF!
EXCUSE ME!
SLAM!
ANE-SAN?!
ANE-SAN?! ARE YOU AWAKE?!
GRR!
ANE-SAN?!
UGH...

S-SOMEONE GRABBED MY NECK FROM BEHIND...

KATTE!

KATTE!

ANE-SAN!

YES, ANE-SAN!

THE CULPRIT SHOULD STILL BE NEARBY.

SEARCH THE AREA!

STOP!!

WE DON'T WANT TO CAUSE A PANIC.

CALL AN AMBULANCE!

WOMAN?!

THIS WAS DONE BY A WOMAN.

A WOMAN COULD PROBABLY SNEAK IN EASIER...

SHE WAS PROBABLY HIDING IN THE ROOM BEFORE I CAME HOME.

BUT HOW DID HE GET IN?

WE HAVE SECURITY CAMERAS ALL THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE.

YOU'RE ALL USELESS!

THERE'S NO POINT IN TAKING IT OUT ON THEM.

...STOP.

WHINE

NONE OF YOU REALIZED WE HAD AN INTRUDER?!

GRRR

IS THAT SO?

Y-YES.

THANK YOU.

THE DOGS WERE THE FIRST TO REALIZE SOMETHING WAS WRONG IN YOUR ROOM.

I'LL TAKE YOU TO SEE HIM.

JOIN ME.

SO WHO WAS THAT WOMAN?

A HIRED ASSASSIN?

NO...

IT CAN'T BE...

KATAKURA'S MISTRESS?

WE'D LIKE TO MOVE YOU TO THE MAIN OFFICE.

OR, IF YOU PREFER, YOU COULD TAKE REFUGE AT OUR VILLA IN IZU.

AH!

ANE-SAN...

THERE ARE BLIND SPOTS IN THE HOUSE'S SECURITY GRID.

WHAT?!

I'LL MOVE TO A HOTEL.

BUT, ANE-SAN...

PLEASE, I DON'T WANT TO BE WATCHED ROUND THE CLOCK BY THUGS LIKE YOU.

I SEE...

A HIGH END PLACE SHOULD HAVE A GOOD SECURITY SYSTEM.

I'VE ARRANGED FOR YOU TO RECEIVE ROOM SERVICE EVERY DAY.

ANYONE WHO ENTERS YOUR ROOM WILL BE SEARCHED BY US BEFORE THEY STEP FOOT INSIDE.

WE'RE PRETTY HIGH UP. ALL THE OTHER BUILDINGS THIS HEIGHT ARE PRETTY FAR OFF.

BUT JUST IN CASE, PLEASE DO NOT STAND NEAR THE WINDOWS.

YES.

FINE! NOW GET OUT!

KA-CHUNK!

IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, ANE-SAN, WE'LL BE STATIONED IN THE ROOM NEXT DOOR.

YES, THANK YOU. I GOT IT. I GOT IT.

SIGH...

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT LEAVE THE HOTEL BY YOURSELF.

ALL THIS TIME, WAS HE LYING TO MY FACE, BETRAYING ME AND HIS DAUGHTER?

WAS THERE ANOTHER WOMAN IN HIS LIFE?

...OUT OF LOYALTY TO THE GROUP AND MY FATHER.

MAYBE SHE WAS THE ONE HE LOVED, AND I WAS THE ONE HE MARRIED...

NO... MAYBE...

OR MAYBE IT WAS A WOMAN HE WAS INVOLVED WITH BEFORE WE GOT MARRIED.

IT'S STILL AFTERNOON IN SWITZERLAND, MAMA.

IT'S LATE, SWEETIE! IS SOMETHING WRONG?

MAMA!

YURI-CHAN?

JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE... AROUND YOUR NEXT BREAK.

THE WINTER HOLIDAY IS ALREADY FINISHED.

HEY, MAMA. WHEN CAN I COME BACK TO JAPAN?

I SEE.

NO. I JUST WANTED TO HEAR YOUR VOICE...

OH, THAT'S RIGHT. DID SOMETHING HAPPEN AT SCHOOL?

NO MATTER WHAT...

I HAVE TO PROTECT MY DAUGHTER.

REALLY?!

REALLY. SO LISTEN TO YOUR GRANDMA AND STUDY HARD.

OKAY, MAMA.

NOT UNTIL THINGS HAVE CALMED DOWN AROUND HERE.

B-BEFORE THEN, MAMA WILL GO VISIT YOU.

I SHOULD BE WITH YURI.

WE CAN LIVE TOGETHER IN A FARAWAY COUNTRY WHERE NO ONE WILL EVER FIND US.

I SHOULDN'T BE HERE.

Hey, Su-chan! Su-chan! Where are you?!

I SEE. IT'S VERY FORTUNATE YOU WERE THERE.

LUNCH-TIME, MA'AM.

LET ME TASTE IT FIRST.

I SEE.

I'VE BEEN COOPED UP IN THIS HOLE FOR AN ENTIRE WEEK! I'VE LOST MY APPETITE!

I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!!

IT'S STRANGE THAT THEY WOULD CHOOSE EVENING TO CLEAN A POOL FAMED FOR ITS EVENING VIEW.

ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT THE POOL ON THE TOP LEVEL?

I SINCERELY APOLOGIZE.

IT IS CURRENTLY BEING CLEANED AND WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR ANOTHER HOUR.

WE MADE RESER-VATIONS, YOU KNOW?!

WE CAN'T USE THE POOL?

Reception

CLEANING MY ASS! SOME VIP'S PROBABLY PAID THEM TO SHUT IT DOWN TO THE PUBLIC.

PERHAPS SO.

BUT, BUT--

HUH?!

OH, FOR FUCK'S SAKE! THERE'S NO ONE BEHIND THE PLANTS! JUST GET OUT!

YOU CHECK BEHIND THE PLANTS?

SHOWERS AND REST-ROOMS ARE CLEAR.

THERE'S NO ONE HERE.

N-NO!

OF COURSE NOT!

YOU WANT TO EXAMINE MY NAKED BODY?

BUT WHAT?

HMPH.

WE'LL BE STATIONED IN THE CHANGING ROOM AREA.

YES!

FWOOSH

THE REST OF YOU STAND OUTSIDE THE EMERGENCY EXITS.

SPLASH!

Whew!

Urgh!

WHY ARE YOU STILL ALIVE?!

YOU ARE...

SO WHAT ARE WE DOING WASTING TIME HERE?!

HE HAS DIED...

YOU MUST STOP.

AH!

YOU ARE--

YOUR HUSBAND DOES NOT WISH FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

!!

HUFF!

ACK!

KAFF!

KAFF!

YOU...

HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?

.....

WHO ARE YOU?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?!

YOU'RE THE BITCH WHO SNUCK INTO MY HOUSE.

SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN WITH YOU.

ON YOUR BACK.

ALWAYS.

!!

MY BACK...?

...AS A SIGN OF OUR DEVOTION TO THE GROUP...

JUST BEFORE WE GOT MARRIED...

... KATAKURA AND I BOTH GOT TATTOOS.

AS EXPECTED OF A MASTER CRAFTSMAN, IT IS AMAZING.

THIS IS THE WORK OF THE LATE HORIMASA-SAN, CORRECT?

...AND I GOT A FEMALE ONE.

HE GOT A MALE LION...

... TATTOOED ON HIS BACK...

THIS IS YOUR FEMALE LION.

EXACTLY.

AH!

YOU WERE TRYING TO FOLLOW YOUR OTHER HALF.

EVERYTHING MAKES SENSE NOW.

AH...

THEN I UNDER-STAND...

I'M SORRY I WASN'T ABLE TO REALIZE IT SOONER.

I'M SORRY.

UNH...

SNIFF ...

TO THINK YOU AND YOUR MATE COULD POSSIBLY BETRAY ME.

I'M, SO SORRY...

.....

IF I COULD, I WOULD LOVE TO BE WITH KATAKURA AS WELL.

BUT WE CAN'T RIGHT NOW.

I STILL HAVE YURI.

MADAM ...

RIGHT NOW...

I CANNOT TAKE YOU TO YOUR HUSBAND.

NOT TO MENTION THE HUNDREDS OF MEN WHO LOOK TO ME FOR LEADERSHIP.

...BUT I HAVE BROUGHT A SPECIAL GUEST WITH ME TODAY.

GUEST?

COME ON OUT.

MY LADIES ...

I APOLOGIZE FOR INTERRUPTING YOUR CONVERSATION...

?

DEAR!!

?!

HE HAS BULLET WOUNDS...

...ON HIS SHOULDER AND CHEST.

I AM VERY SORRY.

I WAS UNABLE TO PROTECT MY MASTER.

THEN...YOU ARE KATAKURA'S MALE LION?

WHAT?

...I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU ALONE ANYMORE.

BUT...

...I AM SORRY FOR GIVING YOU SUCH PAINFUL MEMORIES.

MY LOVE ...

.....

ANE-SAN?!

ANE-SAN...

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

ANE-SAN!

WAS ALL THAT...JUST A DREAM?!

I... WHEN DID I FALL ASLEEP...?

.....

AAH!

ANE-SAN, WHAT ARE YOU--?!

グイ

?

...WE WILL BOTH PROTECT YOU.

FROM NOW ON...

THANK YOU.

I ended up working for free this time.

Ahh...

STORY 20 END

第21話／Dandyism

無煙

NO SMOKING

TIMES ARE CHANGING, TAIZUU. PEOPLE AREN'T CONTENT TO SIT AROUND AND LET OTHERS GIVE THEM LUNG CANCER. SMOKING LAWS ARE BECOMING COMMON.

I KNOW!!

.....

ARE YOU TELLING ME TO GO SMOKE IN FRONT OF THE RESTROOMS WITH ALL THE WORKERS AND CUSTOMERS?!

WELL, WE DO HAVE SMOKING AREAS. YOU CAN SMOKE IN CERTAIN SECTIONS OF THE RESTAURANTS AND IN FRONT OF THE REST-ROOMS.

NOW, YOU KNOW THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE.

THERE IS NO WAY THAT SOMEONE WITH AS LITTLE WILLPOWER AS TAIZUU COULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

店物寵

UGH...

YOUR LUNGS WILL THANK YOU.

YOU COULD ALWAYS QUIT SMOKING. NOW MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME.

I WILL EVEN BET ON IT. YOU WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO QUIT SMOKING.

WHAT DID YOU SAY?!

LET'S SEE...

SO, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO PUT ON THE LINE?!

ALL RIGHT. I'LL DO IT!!

はら

はら

HELLO.

AH, YES, YOU WERE HERE YESTER-DAY.

YES, THE PET THAT I REQUEST-ED--

I WAS ABLE TO ACQUIRE IT THIS MORNING.

COME RIGHT THIS WAY.

Y-YES, BUT--

YOU'VE OFFICIALLY STARTED OBSTRUCTING BUSINESS. HAVE A NICE DAY!

OF COURSE I WILL KEEP IT PRIVATE.

WE DO NOT DELVE INTO THE LIVES OF OUR CUSTOMERS.

I APOLOGIZE FOR THAT.

COUNT D, ABOUT THIS TRANSAC-TION--

AT OUR SHOP, WE REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING DISCRETE.

MAYBE EVEN EN-DANGERED.

MAYBE EVEN... LEGENDARY.

AFTER ALL, SOME OF THE ANIMALS WE STOCK ARE QUITE RARE.

THERE IS NO PET THAT COUNT D'S PET SHOP IS UNABLE TO OBTAIN.

...I'LL KICK YOUR ASS OUT OF NEO CHINATOWN!

WHEN I WIN THIS BET...

COUNT D, JUST YOU WATCH!

SHIT!

AH!

TAIZU...

SLAM!

Damn!

TO GET SOME FRESH AIR!

WH- WHERE ARE YOU HEAD- ING?

YOU... YOU... YOU... YOU... YOU...

HAVE ONE OF MINE.

IT'S BECOME A TOUGH WORLD FOR SMOKERS TO LIVE IN.

YOU TOO, TAIZUU?

HEH...

IT'S THE OWNER!

DAMN! EVERYONE IS SO...

QUIT MESSING AROUND AND GET BACK TO WORK!!

YOU KNOW THIS ISN'T A SMOKING AREA!

W-WE'RE SORRY!

AAH!

WHO ARE YOU, POPS?

POPS?

THIS PLACE IS OFF-LIMITS UNLESS YOU WORK HERE.

YOUNG LADY?

I'M THE MANAGER OF THIS BUILDING!

WELL, MY OLDER SISTER STARTED WORKING HERE TODAY.

SHE TOLD ME TO WAIT HERE UNTIL SHE GOT OFF.

!!

IS SHE A SALES CLERK OR A WAITRESS?

WORK?

HEY, WHAT'S THAT?!

HUH?

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?!

THERE! THAT SHINY THING.

FWISH!

CRACK!

P!

CHIN?!

I'VE JUST BEEN SHOT AT ON THE ROOF FROM THE TOP LEVEL OF THE TOWER NEXT DOOR.

THAT CAME FROM THE BUILDING NEXT DOOR!

HYA!

HANG ON. LET'S WAIT JUST A MINUTE MORE.

WHAT?!

THIS GIRL SAVED MY LIFE. IF SHE HADN'T PULLED ME OVER, I'D BE DEAD!

AHH?!

HEAVY ...

DID YOU SCRATCH YOUR KNEE? LET ME SEE.

OWW...

TAIZUU!!!

WHAT SORT OF ATTITUDE--

HUH?!

WHAT A PERVERTED OLD MAN!

BUT THAT GIRL'S INJURIES...!

GIRL?

ACK!

YES, I'M FINE!

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!

HUH?

SHE'S GONE...?!

?

I HAVE A BACKUP PLAN.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, DEAR.

DAMN!

THE POLICE WILL BE MORE ALERT NOW. A SECOND HIT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO PULL OFF.

YOU FAILED?!

I SEE. WELL, FORGET IT!

COME IN.

ARE YOU AN IDIOT?! NO, NO POLICE. WE CAN'T RELY ON THEM.

DO YOU THINK THAT IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE HONG KONG MAFIA?

I'M SORRY, SIR. WE WERE UNABLE TO FIND THE CULPRIT.

WE SHOULD NOTIFY THE POLICE.

WE SHOULD TRY TO SORT THIS OUT OURSELVES.

BESIDES, OUR TENANTS AND CUSTOMERS WILL GET UNEASY IF THEY LEARN THAT THE OWNER WAS SHOT AT.

I DON'T WANT THE BASTARDS WHO DID THIS TO THINK THEY FRIGHTENED ME INTO HIDING.

WE'LL FOLLOW THE SCHEDULE AS PLANNED.

UNDER-STOOD.

BY THE WAY, TAIZUU, YOU HAVE YOUR REGULAR APPOINTMENT SCHEDULED TODAY. YOU KNOW, THE ONE IN THE BAR LOUNGE?

WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO CANCEL?

MAYBE THIS WASN'T A GOOD IDEA.

EVERY-ONE'S LIGHTING UP.

I FORGOT THAT IT'S STILL OKAY TO SMOKE IN BARS.

MY NAME IS KOUEN.

IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU

THIS YOUNG LADY JUST STARTED TODAY.

TAIZUU...

I SEE...

SHE LOOKS A BIT LIKE THE KID I MET THIS AFTERNOON.

I'M FROM SICHUAN, AND I GO TO JAPANESE SCHOOL DURING THE DAY.

THE AGE DIFFERENCE IS JUST ABOUT RIGHT.

I HAVE A SISTER ABOUT TEN YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME...

HUH?

WELL, YES.

DO YOU HAVE A LITTLE SISTER?

Hm.

Bwa ha ha!

WHY DO YOU ASK?

NO REASON.

HERE YOU GO.

NO, IT'S FINE.

I DON'T SMOKE.

REALLY? SINCE WHEN?

THEN HOW ABOUT THIS?

YES.

I'LL HAVE SOME OF THAT.

YES, IT WAS LONG. WHAT I CAN REMEMBER OF IT.

I JUST DON'T FEEL AWAKE WITHOUT A MORNING SMOKE.

LONG NIGHT, I TAKE IT?

HERE, SOME TEA.

YOUR UNDER A GOOD DEAL OF STRESS AND IT'S GOING TO AFFECT YOUR WORK.

THIS ROOM IS NOT A NON-SMOKING AREA.

TAIZUU, PLEASE HAVE ONE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M SORRY.

OF C- COURSE!

WHY WOULD YOU TEMPT ME?!

DAMMIT! YOU KNOW I QUIT SMOKING!

THEN AT 4:00 PM, TEA TIME AT THE PET SHOP--

WAIT A SECOND!

AT 10:00 AM, WE HAVE AN EXECUTIVE MEETING. AT 11:30 AM, AKIRA IS STOPPING BY AND WE NEED TO MAKE THOSE DOCUMENTATION DECISIONS. AT 1:00 PM, WE HAVE LUNCH WITH MR. NAKAGAWA IN GINZA, AND 3:00 PM IS THE NEW RECRUIT CEREMONY.

THEN HERE'S TODAY'S SCHEDULE.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "TEA TIME AT THE PET SHOP"?

WELL...

YOU ALWAYS SEEM TO ENJOY STOPPING BY, SO I THOUGHT I'D--

TAIZUU!

DON'T FOLLOW ME!

RESCHEDULE ALL MY APPOINTMENTS! I'M TAKING THE DAY OFF!

TAIZUU, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!

SLAM!

I CAN'T IMAGINE THEY'D TRY COMING AFTER ME THE SAME WAY, BUT STILL...

I MUST HAVE SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME, COMING BACK TO THE ROOF.

!!

IT'S DANGEROUS HERE! GET DOWN!!

HEY, YOU!

AH! THE OLD MAN FROM YESTERDAY.

MY NAME IS RYOKU-EN.

WOO... FEI.

I'M RAU. WOO-FEI RAU.

I'M NOT OLD!

COULD HER OLDER SISTER BE AN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT?

I JUST MOVED TO THIS COUNTRY.

SCHOOL? I DON'T GO.

IT'S A WEEKDAY, RYOKU-EN. WHY AREN'T YOU IN SCHOOL?

YEAH ...

BUT...

SOME OF THEM HAVE CHILDREN YOUR AGE. YOU SHOULD PLAY WITH THEM.

THERE ARE A LOT OF CHINESE FAMILIES WHO WORK AND LIVE IN THIS BUILDING.

GET BACK! DON'T TOUCH HER!

I DON'T WANT YOU PLAYING WITH HER!

PEOPLE HATE ME. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE I GO, THEY ALL DO.

SHE'S AN OUTCAST?

SHE GETS OFF LATE AT NIGHT!

I'LL WAIT HERE UNTIL MY SISTER FINISHES HER WORK.

I'M USED TO BEING ALONE.

CLICK!

Chin!
It's time for the meeting. Please return quickly.

WARRR—

ALL RIGHT!

I'LL TAKE YOU SOMEWHERE TODAY!

HUH?!

REALLY?!

I OWE THIS GIRL MY LIFE AFTER ALL.

IF THERE IS SOMETHING YOU WANT, I'LL BUY IT FOR YOU.

RIGHT. ANYWHERE IS FINE.

Ginza? Asakusa? Maybe Harajuku?

THERE'S A PLACE I'VE WANTED TO GO EVER SINCE WE CAME TO JAPAN.

NOT EXACTLY ...

AN AMUSEMENT PARK?!

I STICK OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB OVER HERE.

NO.

IT'S JUST...

NO GOOD?

BUT SOMEONE JUST ATTEMPTED TO KILL HIM.

HA!

HA!

HUH?

SO TAIZUU ISN'T HERE EITHER?

COUNT...

店物龍

CHIN-SAN, WHAT'S WRONG?

HE SHOULD BE LAYING LOW UNTIL WE CAN SORT THIS ALL OUT.

I DON'T MIND HIM GOING OUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE TO RELAX.

SO ONE SINGLE DAY WITHOUT A CIGARETTE AND HE'S ALREADY LOSING IT.

I'M PRETTY SURE IT'S EITHER THE TAIWANESE OR MAYBE ONE OF THE FAMILIES FROM HONG KONG.

THE WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT A VERY EXPENSIVE ASSASSIN WAS RECENTLY CONTRACTED.

KILL HIM...?

YES.

...ASSAS-SIN.

EXPEN-SIVE...

IT CAN'T BE... RIGHT?

HEH HEH HEH...

WOW! YOU LOOK ABOUT FIVE YEARS YOUNGER!

...

LOOKING LIKE THAT, I CAN CALL YOU BIG BROTHER INSTEAD OF POPS.

SHUT UP!

HURRY!

BIG BRO!

STILL, LIKE THIS...

...I DON'T STAND OUT AS MUCH. THAT'S GOOD.

DON'T YELL!

1

2

JEEZ! EVEN IF YOU LOOK YOUNG ON THE OUTSIDE, YOU'RE STILL AN OLD MAN ON THE INSIDE?

LET'S TAKE A SMALL BREAK.

SHUT UP.

W-WAIT A SECOND!

LET'S GO ON THAT NEXT!

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...

Sigh

...THIS IS THE FIRST AMUSEMENT PARK I'VE EVER BEEN TO.

HERE.

Psst...

Gulp.

PASS IT OVER.

YOU DON'T WANT IT?

WHAT IS THAT?

THIS TASTES...DIFFERENT?

HMM?

IT DOESN'T TASTE GOOD?

WHAT'S WRONG?

HA HA!

IT'S NOT BAD.

NO.

WHAT?! ALREADY?!

WE HAVE TO GO BACK SOON.

IT'S GETTING LATE.

WHOA!

WAIT!

WHAT?!

THEN LET'S GO TO A HOTEL NEXT.

BFFT!

WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?!

WHO TOLD YOU SOME-THING LIKE THAT?!

WHA--?! YOU--!

MY SISTER TOLD ME.

WE PLAY, GO SHOPPING, EAT FOOD AND THEN GO TO A HOTEL TO HAVE SEX.

HUH? THAT'S HOW IT'S NORMALLY SUPPOSED TO GO, RIGHT?

HAVE YOU DONE THINGS LIKE THAT, TOO?

MY SISTER'S A PROFESSIONAL.

SHE MAKES HER LIVING OFF OF UNDERSTANDING MEN. AND MANIPULATING THEM.

I see.

That woman...

I...I...I SEE.

Whew...

MY SISTER SAYS I'M STILL JUST AN AMATEUR.

NOPE. TODAY IS MY FIRST.

SHIT. LIKE I HAVE ANY BUSINESS TELLING THIS GIRL ANYTHING CONSIDERING I SPENT LAST NIGHT WITH HER SISTER.

N-NO. THAT IS...

I WANT TO WEAR PRETTY CLOTHES LIKE MY SISTER AND WORK!

AAH! I WISH I'D JUST HURRY AND GROW UP!

WHAT?! THAT LONG?!

AM I THAT UNATRACTIVE?!

DANGER-OUS. DANGER-OUS.

TH-THAT'S RIGHT. I THINK THAT YOU WOULD STILL NEED... ABOUT TEN MORE YEARS.

OR AT THE VERY LEAST...WARN HER.

I SHOULD LECTURE THAT OLDER SISTER OF HERS.

There are over a hundred messages.

Wah!

新中華街

OH?!

WELCOME!

?!

SIGH... CHIN'S PROBABLY FURIOUS.

BUT THAT'S...

HUH?

HEY, YOU!

IT'S LIKE I'M SOMEONE ELSE!

NO ONE REALIZES IT'S ME!

You look nice, Taizuu.

Good job, owner!

USUALLY...

HEY, BUDDY! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

OH, UH...

IT'S ME. WOO-FEI RAU.

TAIZUU?!

SHH!

...SO? WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?

YOU HAVE TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF HER.

ABOUT THIS KID!

COME WITH ME. I HAVE TO TALK TO YOU.

OKAY.

THIS WOMAN ISN'T MY BIG SISTER.

YOU'RE NUTS, WOO-FEI.

NO. NOT SURE WHAT WOULD GIVE YOU THAT IDEA.

MY LITTLE SISTER IS BACK IN MY HOME COUNTRY.

HUH?!

SHE'S YOUR YOUNGER SISTER, RIGHT?!

HEY!

MY SISTER IS MUCH PRETTIER.

SORRY. I WAS TOO QUICK TO JUDGE.

I SEE. I WAS SURE THAT...

HUH... WELL, I'LL BE...

TONIGHT?

BUT, I...

YOU PULLED ME ASIDE AND ASKED ME SOME WEIRD QUESTIONS. THE LEAST YOU COULD DO IS AGREE TO SEE ME TONIGHT.

WELL, THEN...

WAIT, TAIZUU!

NO, OF COURSE NOT!

BUT WHY WAIT FOR TONIGHT?

IS THIS LITTLE GIRL MORE YOUR TYPE?

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

WHAT?!

...YOU MIGHT WANT TO WAIT IN THE PET SHOP. THE OWNER CAN BE ANNOYING, BUT HE ALWAYS BRINGS OUT SOME REALLY TASTY SWEETS.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO WAIT FOR YOUR SISTER...

WHAT?!

RYOKU-EN, I HAVE TO GO. YOU'LL BE OKAY HERE.

WOO-FEI...

HMPF.

...I'LL RISE IN THE RANKS AT THE SHOP.

HEH HEH... IF THE GIRLS KNOW THAT I'M THE OWNER'S FAVORITE...

...BUT I PREFER DINING...

I'M ALL FOR EATING ...

SO WHERE SHOULD WE GO?

...SOME-WHERE WE CAN BE ALONE. IF YOU CATCH MY DRIFT.

WANT TO GO EAT FIRST?

.....

...THEN THERE'S NO REASON I CAN'T HAVE A LITTLE FUN WITH HER.

...IF THIS GIRL'S NOT THE KID'S SISTER...

YOU GOT IT.

Hotel
Papillon
空室有
¥4900
¥6800
DVD
TO YOU.
HOW ABOUT A TOAST?
WELL, TAIZUU ...
I'VE BEEN ALL OVER TOWN TODAY. NEVER THOUGHT I'D END UP HERE, THOUGH.
HEH HEH...
ゴクリ

?!

THAT WINE... THERE'S...

WHAT THE...?

SOME-THING...

...IN IT...

YES...

THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE BRIGHT.

BUT I GUESS YOUR INTELLIGENCE IS THE *SECOND* THING YOU EXAGGERATE ABOUT!

HEH HEH...

HA HA HA HA!

Y- YOU...?!

FOR A MAN LIKE YOU...

...THERE ARE WEAPONS FAR MORE EFFECTIVE THAN A GUN OR KNIFE.

AREN'T THERE, WOO-FEI?

HA!

UGH!

THE DOOR SHOULD HAVE BEEN LOCKED!

YOU?! HOW THE HELL DID YOU GET IN HERE?!

I POISONED HIM, AND NO DOCTOR ALIVE KNOWS HOW TO CURE HIM!

HA HA! THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO FOR HIM. CALL AN AMBULANCE IF YOU'D LIKE, THEY CAN'T HELP YOU!

UGH...

POISON ...

BIG BROTHER, HANG IN THERE!

BIG BRO-THER?!

YOU POISONED HIM?

?!

AND PEOPLE SAY YOU'RE ONE OF THE BEST.

GUNS, KNIVES, GAR-ROTES...

...EVEN POISON...

A TRUE ASSASSIN NEEDS NONE OF THESE TO KILL.

WHY ARE YOU...?

RYOKU-EN?

WOO-FEI...

WOO-FEI!!

KOU-EN...?

RYOKU-EN? WHAT ARE--?!

?!

SLICE!

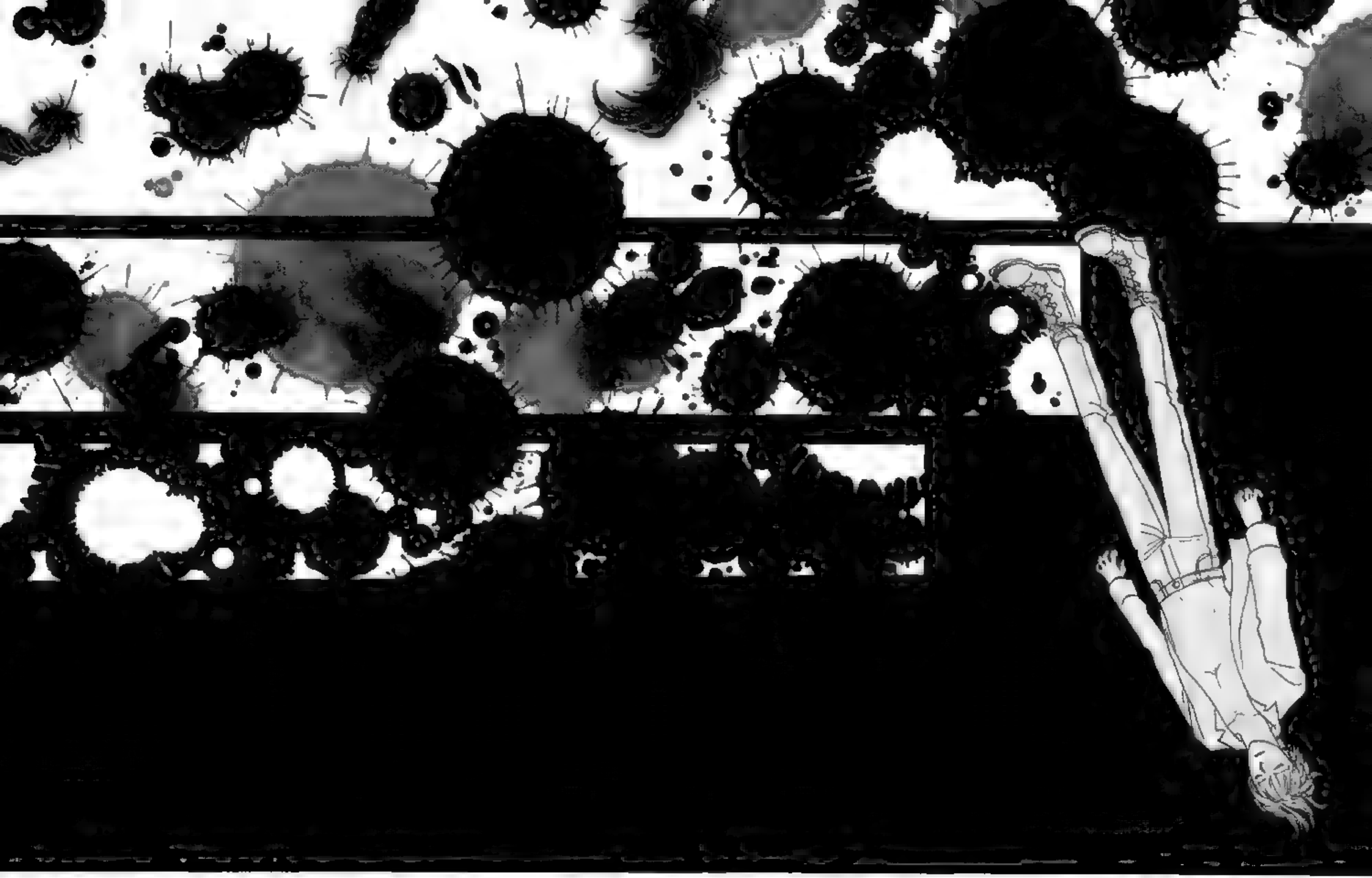
DRINK IT...

UGH ...

RYOKU-EN?!

DRINK MY BLOOD!

MY LIFE...



URGH...

I'M IN THE PET SHOP?

SO YOU'RE AWAKE, TAIZUU.

COUNT ...?

AH! THAT'S RIGHT.

WHAT... HAPPENED TO ME?

KOU-EN...

SHE WAS AN ASSASSIN!

IT'S LIKE I SAID. YOU HAVE NO WILLPOWER.

A PRETTY WOMAN SMILES AT YOU...

...AND YOU FOLLOW HER ALL THE WAY TO YOUR DEATH. WELL, NEARLY.

SHE TRIED TO HAVE ME DRINK HER BLOOD.

THAT... WAS...

IT HAD TO BE A DREAM... RIGHT?

THE LITTLE GIRL! AROUND 12 YEARS OLD.

HMM?

WHAT ABOUT RYOKU-EN?

HER REAL SISTER?

SISTER?!

YES.

HER OLDER SISTER CAME TO PICK HER UP.

IF YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THE YOUNG LADY, SHE WENT HOME A WHILE AGO.

THE ZHEN IS A LEGENDARY BIRD FROM CHINA.

IT IS SAID THAT IF YOU PUT JUST ONE OF THEIR FEATHERS IN A CUP OF WINE...

...THE WINE BECOMES A DEADLY POISON.

...IS CAPABLE OF CURING ANY POISON.

THOSE ARE THE ZHEN SISTERS.

HOWEVER, THE BLOOD OF A LIVING ZHEN...

N-NO, THAT WAS...

物寵

I WAS GOING TO GIVE RYOKU-EN'S SISTER A PIECE OF MY MIND!

WAIT, THAT'S RIGHT!

YOU WERE VERY KIND TO THE YOUNGER SISTER, AND SHE APPRECIATES IT.

OH, THAT'S RIGHT! THE ELDER SISTER TOLD ME TO THANK YOU.

I AM SO GLAD THAT YOU'RE SAFE!

YOUR HAIR'S GREYER THAN NORMAL.

WAAAAH!

CHIN.

TAIZUU!!!!

N-NO... WELL, UH...

Kaff!

SORRY FOR DISAP-PEARING LIKE THAT. YEAH.

WHAT?!

THIS MORNING THEY FOUND THE TAIWAN BOSS DEAD IN A SHINJUKU HOTEL.

WELL, IF YOU'VE BEEN OUT, YOU'VE MISSED THE BIG NEWS...

HIS ASSOCIATES SAID HE SPENT THE EVENING WITH A WOMAN, BUT SHE SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED.

IT LOOKS LIKE HE JUST DIED FROM A HEART ATTACK.

THERE WERE NO VISIBLE INJURIES AND NO SIGN OF POISONING.

THE ASSASSIN WAS HIRED BY THE BOSS' WIFE.

SHE HAD FINALLY GROWN TIRED OF HIS PHILANDERING.

SOUNDS FAMILIAR.

HUH? WELL, I SUPPOSE HE DIED WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE, AT LEAST.

Phew!

I DON'T NEED YOUR CONCERN!

HAH!

YOU SHOULD BE CAREFUL, TAIZUU.

TAIZUU?

AH!

店物寵

NOW, I WONDER WHAT I'LL HAVE YOU DO...

NO, WAIT! THAT'S NOT... YOU SET ME UP, COUNT!

HEH HEH...

I KNEW YOU COULDN'T QUIT.

STORY 21 END

IT'S A CLEAR NIGHT IN SHINJUKU...

AND THE STARS ARE GLIMMERING BETWEEN THE BRIGHTLY COLORED NEON LIGHTS.

I WONDER IF SHE CONTINUES TO WATCH THEM EVEN NOW

第22話／Detour

AND I DO EMPHASIZE THE WORD *LITTLE*. HEH HEH...

...HE RAN AWAY WITH LITTLE MORE ON HIS BODY THAN WHAT GOD GRACED HIM WITH.

YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO GO SOMEPLACE DIFFERENT. AND YOU HAVE TO ADMIT, THIS PLACE IS PRETTY...DIFFERENT.

Ah ha ha!

COUNT, WHY THE HELL DID YOU BRING ME HERE?!

EERGH! STAY BACK!

YOU DEMONS!

退散

PAPER· Charm Against Demons

THESE TWO MEN ARE WHIS-PERING, DEAR.

OH, I DO SO LOVE GOSSIP! WHAT'S THE NEWS?!

KYAAH!

...DESERVES TO BE PUNISHED!

KYAAH!

WILL YOU CUT IT OUT?!

YOU UPSET MY FRIEND. THAT'S NOT VERY NICE. ANYONE WHO COULD DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT...

DEMONS? HOW RUDE! AND HERE I HEARD YOU WERE OPEN TO NEW EXPERIENCES, TAIZUU.

YUKI, WE SHOULD GO. WE DON'T NEED THIS.

LET ME SEE! LET ME SEE!

MEN OR WOMEN, EVERYONE LOVES SHINY NEW THINGS.

OOH, THAT'S THE LATEST MODEL, ISN'T IT?

HEY!

GOD, SHE'S BEAUTIFUL. ♡

SHE'S ALMOST 30 YEARS OLD, BUT YOU'D NEVER GUESS IT.

I'M MUCH MORE BEAUTIFUL.

HEY, THAT'S WHAT THE MODEL KAORU ADVERTISES IN HER COMMERCIAL.

YES, YES, THIS ONE HERE.

OOH, LOOK AT THAT, LADIES. THAT'S DEFINITELY COLLAGEN.

YEAH, AND THOSE BROWS HAVE BEEN BOTOXED, DEFINITELY!

I WONDER WHERE SHE GETS HER COSMETICS.

MAMA. I'D LIKE THE BILL.

SURE.

MANY OF MY REGULARS ARE STRAIGHT.

IN FACT, I GET A LOT OF DETECTIVES AND PSYCHICS.

But don't hold that against it!

THIS BAR ISN'T JUST FOR GAYS.

TAIZUU.

THAT GUY DIDN'T LOOK GAY.

LESBIANS AND WOMEN WHO THINK THEY ARE MEN ARE DIFFERENT TOO.

THERE'S ALSO A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN WHO LIKE MEN AND MEN WHO LIKE DRESSING LIKE GIRLS.

THERE'S THE GUYS INTO S&M, MACHO LOVE, CUTE BOYS LOVE.

THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF "GAY."

I-I-I-I'LL TAKE YOUR WORD ON IT.

THE POINT IS THAT THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH TAKING A DIP IN THE OTHER POOL OCCASIONALLY.

YUU-SUKE?

THAT'S YOU, YUU-CHAN, ISN'T IT?

I THOUGHT I RECOG-NIZED YOU.

...KAORU?!

SHIT! HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN? ABOUT TEN YEARS?

WE TOTALLY NEED TO GET CAUGHT UP. CARE TO GO FOR A RIDE?

HUH?!

ARE YOU SERIOUS? BUT IF THE NEWSPAPERS SAW YOU WITH ME--

YOU'RE A TOP MODEL AND I'M JUST A SORRY OLD MAN.

GIGGLE. I GUESS IT MIGHT BE HARD TO IMAGINE...

IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM.

KAORU, IT WOULD BE A ***HUGE*** PROBLEM!

...THAT WE WERE IN THE SAME CLASS IN HIGH SCHOOL.

THIS HOTEL VALUES THE PRIVACY OF ITS GUESTS, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ANYONE SEEING US.

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!

AH... SURE.

YEAH.

IS CHAMPAGNE ALL RIGHT?

.....

THEN TO OLD FRIENDS.

HMM.

NO, I'M WORKING PART-TIME IN SHINJUKU.

ARE YOU STILL IN THE CAR BUSINESS?

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?

OKAY, I GUESS.

.....

AND THAT TEMPER OF YOURS! ALWAYS FIGHTING WITH CUSTOMERS.

SIP

YOU WERE NEVER ONE TO DO THE SAME THING FOR TOO LONG. YOU GOT BORED SO EASILY.

WHAT IS THERE TO ASK?

YOU'RE SO QUIET! DON'T YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR ME?

WELL, IT'S NICE TO KNOW YOU'VE BEEN THINKING OF ME AT LEAST THAT MUCH.

OH.

I'M SICK OF SEEING YOU EVERY DAY ON TV AND IN MAGAZINES.

.....

YUU-CHAN...

SPLASH!

OH MAN, THAT IS ONE UGLY FISH.

OR IS IT A SALAMANDER?

HUH? WHAT THE...?

WHAT'S THIS?!

IT'S CUTE!

LOOK AT ITS PRETTY EYES.

DON'T BE RUDE!

NOT TO MENTION THAT SHE SAVED MY LIFE.

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.

WHAT?

WHAT?

SHE'S THE SOURCE ...

...OF MY BEAUTY AND YOUTH.

YUU-CHAN...

...CHILDREN LIKE WE WERE BACK THEN.

WE'RE NO LONGER...

.....

STOP IT!

SHOVE!

I'M GOING HOME.

YUU-CHAN?!

YUU...

WHAT IS IT?!

YOU'RE PATHETIC!

Kabuki-cho
1st Street

DAMN!

11°
ミスト

11°
ミスト

I KNOW YOU.

YOU WERE IN THE BAR.

AAH!

SHIT!

OH! I'M SORRY!

寵物店

YES, WE DO QUITE WELL.

BUSINESS HOURS HAVE ENDED, BUT IF YOU FIND A PET YOU LIKE, I WILL SELL IT TO YOU.

A PET SHOP IN A PLACE LIKE THIS...?

WOULD YOU LIKE SOME TEA?

HUH...

NAH, THAT'S OKAY.

I'M TOO BUSY TO TAKE CARE OF A PET.

KAORU?

OH, UH... SHE'S JUST--

THAT'S THE SAME UGLY FISH I SAW AT KAORU'S.

I KNOW.

N-NO, WE'RE JUST--

SO YOU ARE FRIENDS WITH KAORU-SAN.

I SEE. I SEE.

YOU'RE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS, RIGHT?

.....

I'll give you a big discount on the price.
Don't worry! She's really easy to take care of!
GREAT. JUST GREAT. I TOLD THE GUY I DIDN'T WANT A PET.

YOU, MY FRIEND, ARE REALLY UNLUCKY.

YOUR FRIEND LIVING WITH KAORU HAS IT MADE; LIVING IN THE LAP OF LUXURY...

...BUT YOU'RE LIVING WITH A GUY IN HIS THIRTIES THAT CAN'T EVEN HOLD A REAL JOB.

I GUESS WE'RE BOTH PRETTY PATHETIC, EH?

Z

NNGH...

HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?!

WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!

UWAAH!

WHAT? CAN'T YOU SPEAK JAPANESE?

AH... UH...

LOOK, I HAVE NOTHING OF VALUE HERE!

OKAY, AND WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?

YOU CAN'T SPEAK...

It looks like you can understand what I'm saying.

OH, SHIT! I'M LATE FOR WORK!

AH!

DID I GET DRUNK AND BRING YOU HOME?

EVEN WASTED, THERE'S NO WAY I'D THINK THAT LOOKED GOOD.

GOD, NO!

And she's too young!

AND DON'T COME BACK, OKAY?

OKAY, TIME TO GO!

OH, CRAP! I FORGOT ABOUT THE FISH!

I LEFT HOME WITHOUT FEEDING IT.

HURRY UP AND WIPE DOWN THOSE TABLES.

YES!

YOU'RE LATE!

S-SORRY.

HERE YOU SEE KAORU ENTERING THE HOTEL WITH A MYSTERY MAN.

...OF THE HOTEL THAT KAORU, THE WORLD-FAMOUS MODEL, HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN STAYING AT.

UP NEXT, WE HAVE FOOTAGE...

...IT TURNS OUT THAT MAN WAS NONE OTHER THAN TAKASHI NAKAZATO, THE ACTOR.

WELL, VIEWERS...

IT BETTER NOT BE...

YES, WE'VE BEEN DATING FOR AWHILE. WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT GETTING MARRIED.

UP UNTIL NOW...

...TAKASHI'S BEEN CLAIMING THAT THE PAIR WERE JUST FRIENDS, BUT...

I THINK IT'S GREAT.

SO WHAT DO WE THINK ABOUT THIS?

--SAYS TAKASHI BOLDLY ABOUT THEIR RELATION-SHIP.

I MIGHT JUST SEGWAY THIS INTO A PROPOSAL.

LOOKS LIKE THE FANS ARE BEHIND THIS PAIRING, SO LET'S HOPE IT HAS LEGS LONGER THAN... WELL, KAORU!

IT'S SHOCKING, BUT...

...HE'S DEFINITELY CUTE. I THINK THEY MAKE A GREAT COUPLE!

.....

Hey, new guy! Get back to work!

Hic!

THIS CRAP AGAIN?

LEFT SIGN: Loan thief! RIGHT SIGN: Return the money!

AH!

...

HOW DID YOU GET IN?!

I'LL CALL THE COPS!

YOU... YOU'RE STILL HERE?!

I'LL...

HOLD ON... DID YOU MAKE THAT?

TASTES TERRIBLE!

EVEN I CAN COOK BETTER THAN THIS!

DEP.

EATING THIS IS BAD ENOUGH WITHOUT HAVING TO BE IN THE COMPANY OF A DEPRESSED KID.

OH, STOP ACTING SO SAD!

THIS IS MORE THAN SALMON ROE...

IT LOOKS LIKE POMEGRANATE.

WHAT IS THIS?

HMM?

WELL, WHAT-EVER.

IS IT A DESSERT?

THIS IS EDIBLE?

IT'S NOT SWEET!

UGH!

HUH?

MY THROAT ...

IT FEELS LIKE IT'S BURNING!

UGH!

IT'S ACTUALLY PRETTY SALTY...

YOU...

WHAT... DID...

YUU-CHAN?

UMM...

.....

KAORU...

I REMEMBER THAT DAY.

HELL, I REMEMBER THE VERY HOUR.

IF ONLY I HAD BEEN ABLE...

...TO SAY WHAT I REALLY FELT.

MY LIFE WOULD'VE BEEN DIFFERENT.

OUR LIVES WOULD'VE BEEN DIFFERENT.

AH!

HUH? IT WAS A DREAM?

...

DID YOU DRUG ME?!

WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT?!

YOU!

COULD IT BE?

MAYBE THAT THING WAS SOME SORT OF VITAMIN SUPPLEMENT.

HMM?

MY HAIR LOOKS BETTER, TOO!

I LOOK DIFFERENT. MY SKIN'S IN BETTER SHAPE AND I'VE SHAVED.

KNOCK!

KNOCK!

IT'S ME! PLEASE OPEN THE DOOR!

YUU-CHAN?

ARE YOU HERE?

CRAP!

THE LOAN SHARKS ARE BACK.

DAMN!

COME IN, FIRST.

I-I WANTED TO TELL YOU... THAT WHAT THEY SAID ON THAT TV SHOW WAS COMPLETELY UNTRUE.

KAORU...?

HOW DID YOU KNOW I LIVED HERE?

WHAT ABOUT IT?

WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

TAKASHI-SAN SAID ALL OF THAT ON HIS OWN, I-I--

YUU-CHAN!

SHUT UP!

EVER SINCE HIGH SCHOOL, I'VE ALWAYS--

I--

I CAN'T FALL FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU.

I...

.....

KLATTA

WHO IS THAT GIRL?

IS SOMEONE HERE?

.....

!!

SHE'S MY GIRLFRIEND!

COME TO THINK OF IT, I DON'T EVEN KNOW HER NAME.

SHE... SHE'S...

OF COURSE!

YOU'RE SAYING THAT THIS LITTLE GIRL IS BETTER FOR YOU THAN ME?

NO... WAY.

IN FACT, WE'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT GETTING MARRIED SOON.

THE WORLDS WE LIVE IN ARE TOO DIFFERENT.

...BUT SHE'S NOT A FAKE LIKE YOU!

YEAH, SHE MAY NOT BE CUTE ENOUGH FOR THE COVERS OF MAGAZINES...

10,000,000 YEN WOULD BE GOOD.

FOR YOU, THAT'S JUST POCKET CHANGE, RIGHT?

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME, HOW ABOUT SOME MONEY?

MARRY THAT RICH ACTOR AND HAVE A GREAT LIFE. I DON'T NEED YOUR PITY.

MAYBE NOW SHE'LL FINALLY LEAVE ME ALONE.

ABOUT YOUR TRUE IDENTITY.

BUT IT'S ENOUGH TO BUY MY SILENCE.

?!

HEH HEH!

EVEN B-BETTER.

THIS WAY IS...A LOT F-FASTER.

NOW W-WE KNOW... WHAT DEPTHS ...

...YOU'LL GO T-TO PROTECT... IT...

... SECRET ...

OUR D-DEADLY LITTLE...

YUU-CHAN?!

YUU...

WHY...?

I...

YUU-CHAN, WAKE UP!

Ah!

ウッ…
AH...
I KNOW YOU.
YOU'RE FROM COUNT D'S PET SHOP!

I-I... THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE...

YOU'RE JUST LIKE THE ONE THAT I HAVE!

EITHER PAY US THE MONEY YOU OWE, OR WE'LL GUT YOUR ASS...

...AND SELL YOUR ORGANS TO SOME OF OUR MEDICAL FRIENDS.

HEY, ASSHOLE!

KNOCK!

KNOCK!

OPEN IT UP, OR WE'LL BREAK IT DOWN!

WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!

OPEN UP, YUUSUKE OOTA!

WITH THIS... IT'S REALLY OVER.

HEH...

HEH HEH HEH...

WHY... WHY DIDN'T I SAY ANYTHING WHEN WE WERE STILL YOUNG AND FREE?

I DIDN'T JUST END YOUR LIFE, BUT MINE AS WELL.

I LOVE YOU, YUU-CHAN.

I HAD MAKEOVERS AND EVENTUALLY SURGERY...

YUU-CHAN DESERVED A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, SO I BECAME ONE FOR HIM.

AFTER GRADUATION, I SAVED UP MONEY SO I COULD LIVE IN AMERICA.

...ONCE HE SAW WHAT I HAD DONE TO MYSELF...

BUT...

WHEN I CAME HOME, THE FIRST THING I DID WAS VISIT YUU-CHAN. I WAS SO EXCITED.

...HE LOOKED AT ME LIKE I WAS A FREAK.

IT WAS WHEN I WAS AT MY LOWEST...

...EVEN CHANGED MY NAME

WHY DID I DO THIS?

I LEFT MY FAMILY...

...THAT COUNT D APPEARED.

I WAS DETERMINED TO WORK AS HARD AS I COULD TO BECOME A MODEL.

AFTER THAT, I HAD A NEW OUTLOOK ON LIFE.

YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL, MY CHILD. SUCH GOOD LOOKS AS YOURS DESERVE TO BE SHARED WITH THE WORLD.

AFTER ALL, IF LOOKS WEREN'T ENOUGH TO WIN YOU OVER, MAYBE SUCCESS AND MONEY WOULD BE.

YOU-HATED ME THAT MUCH..;.

I YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE SEEN WITH ME

TO BE **TOUCHED** BY ME!

BUT...

..EVEN THAT FAILED TO IMPRESS YOU.

I LOVE YOU.

HUH?

THEY ARE THE WORDS THAT YUUSUKE SWALLOWED TEN YEARS AGO.

?!

...THEY WERE STUCK IN HIS THROAT.

ALL THIS TIME...

TEN YEARS AGO...?

.....

YUUSUKE!

GET YOUR ASS OUT HERE!

MY TEARS HAVE THE POWER OF ETERNAL YOUTH.

WHAT?

EAT ME.

MY FLESH...

Dark secrets from her lurid past!

In hiding after her devastating breakup with Takashi Nakazato?

Kaoru disappears!

HE COULDN'T EVEN MUSTER UP FEELINGS FOR A WOMAN WHO USED TO BE A MAN.

POOR BOY WAS DOOMED FROM THE START.

YUU-CHAN WAS NEVER COMFORTABLE WITH IT, BUT HE WAS GAY THROUGH AND THROUGH.

A MAN WAS FOUND STABBED IN EAST SHINJUKU. HE, WAS DISCOVERED DEAD IN HIS APARTMENT ALONG WITH TWO LOAN SHARKS WHO WERE FLEEING THE SCENE. HE WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN IN DEBT AND WAS LIKELY MURDERED DUE TO NONPAYMENT.

LONG AGO...

...A WOMAN STOLE THE ELIXIR OF ETERNAL LIFE.

PUNISHED FOR HER CRIME, SHE ASCENDED TO THE MOON...

...AND IS SAID TO BE LIVING THERE ALONE TO THIS DAY.

IT'S SAID SHE SPENDS HER NIGHTS LOOKING AT THE STARS AND WISHING FOR A LOVE THAT WAS NEVER TO BE...

STORY 22 END

Pet catalog

A honey eater is, like the name infers, a bird who drinks the honey from flowers. Although there are honey eaters all over the world, the widest variety can be found in Hawaii, where secluded on an island, many different species evolved. It is said that about 200 years ago, there were 50 different varieties of honey eaters, but today there are only about ten. The reasons for their extinction are varied, though most of them were killed off by hunters or by disease brought by European travelers when they first discovered the islands.

Why is it that lions and peonies have always been paired? Well, it's believed that there is one thing the lion--the king of all animals--is afraid of. It's the parasitic bug that eats the skin on the lion's paws. That insect, however, hates peony flowers. For that reason, lions began sleeping under peony flowers--that is the legend that spawned this popular pairing.

It's very similar to the popular image of the tiger and bamboo. This also is from a story that tells how the only enemy of the tiger is the elephant, which hates bamboo. Therefore, bamboo forests offer safe shelter for tigers.

ZHEN

This is a bird that carries deadly poison which appears in ancient Chinese texts. They feed on poisonous plants and as a result, have poisonous flesh and feathers. Even worse, the poison has no taste or smell. Often, the feathers of the zhen bird were used to poison an enemy's cup as a means of assassination. It is said that an emperor who was afraid of being assassinated by zhen feathers burned down the entire mountain on which the birds lived. He also drank a powder made from rhino horn which was thought to protect against zhen poison. As a result of this story, rhino horns gained a reputation as being protective against toxins, which led to an unfortunate amount of rhino hunting...

In Japan, the popular medicine for eternal life is the flesh of a mermaid, but in ancient China, the elixir of eternal life came from supernatural hermits. In Japan, it's thought that there is a rabbit that lives on the moon and makes rice cakes, but in China is it said that there is a toad called "Chang'e." The legend of Chang'e has many different variations. In one, a hermit husband and wife were banished to Earth and made mortal. The beautiful wife, Chang'e, wanted to go back to the heavens and received two doses of the elixir of life from the God of Hosts for her and her husband. However, she took both in her greed and rose up to the moon. As heavenly punishment she became an ugly toad. In another version, the couple were living happily on Earth as mortals, but to prevent the elixir of life from being stolen, the wife swallowed it and floated up to the moon against her will. After that, the still-beautiful wife lived on the moon and the husband who was left on Earth would gather flowers and mourn for her on the full moon. It is said that this is how the moon-viewing festival started.

CHANG'E